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Revisiting dissemination

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Introduction

A fundamental aspect of the staff and educational developer's role is the ability to share knowledge with colleagues in such a compelling way that they are motivated to take some sort of action. It is very difficult. Even the most enthusiastic participant in a workshop is likely to be faced by a series of 'challenges' when they return to their own department or institution, no matter how convincing their story might be. Evidence-informed argument, while absolutely vital, is unlikely on its own to be sufficiently persuasive to realise significant and enduring change.

Yet being able to disseminate effectively may be more important than ever. The Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) have reached the point that they are required to disseminate externally. Enhancement-led institutional review requires evidence that enhancement has been successfully transferred. Funded projects usually have dissemination elements.

What we already know about dissemination

There is already a considerable literature. For example, support for the HEFCE-funded Teaching Quality Enhancement initiatives by the National Co-ordination Team (NCT) and, latterly, the Higher Education Academy have established a dissemination model that has been celebrated in a number of publications (King, 2000; Gravestock, 2002; McKenzie *et al.,* 2005; Harmsworth and Turpin, 2000; Stewart and Thompson, 2005).

This model identifies a number of important principles. King, for example, argues that dissemination must be seen as a process that comprises three elements: the dissemination objective; the practitioner focus; and the context explication.

Establishing the dissemination objective helps us to focus on the purpose for doing it at all: *dissemination for awareness, dissemination for understanding, dissemination for action.* A further crucial principle is that effective dissemination, *dissemination for action,* requires engagement with users. For that reason Harmsworth and Turpin introduced the dissemination objectives of: 'support and favourability; involvement; and commitment and action' in the still widely-used interactive workbook they prepared for the NCT.

Practitioner focus entails ensuring that the practical needs of the end user are taken into account. As King points out, this might include some market research to ensure that someone wants whatever it is you are developing or introducing; that it is cost-effective from their point of view to engage with what you are doing; that what you are offering might in some way improve the quality of a process; or reduce the time it takes to do it; or reduce the cost of doing it in a reliable and sustainable way.

Context explication refers both to the context in which something is developed and the context in which it is intended to be used. In relation to the former, the

credibility of the person or team doing the disseminating is absolutely vital.

Effective dissemination is also more than introducing a new process or learning objective – 'stuff development'; it is also, as King reminds us, about changing *ideas* and *values* about learning and teaching.

In short, as King states, this model of dissemination comprises a process that asks the following questions:

- *What* do you want to disseminate (information, resources, examples of practice)?
- *Who* is your target audience?
- *Why* do you want to disseminate it (awareness, understanding, action)?
- *How* are you going to do it (methodologies and context)?
- How might you *involve* your target audiences?
- Have you allowed time for *evaluation, reflection* and re-planning?
- How will you know that your dissemination has been *successful?*

Adaptation, adoption and embedding – the Carrick Model

Experience with using the model described above has led to a particular concern with *embedding.* How does one ensure that the enthusiasm that others might have for one's initiative is translated into significant and lasting change? The CETLs, for example, have a requirement to achieve sustainable change. This is an issue addressed by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) – originally the Carrick Institute (McKenzie *et al.,* 2005). In its endeavour to discover the conditions necessary for successful adaptation and adoption of learning and teaching developments the Carrick findings add to our understanding of dissemination in a number of ways.

At the outset, the Carrick model questions what we understand by 'learning and teaching innovation' since, quite often, what is new to one group of staff may be quite familiar to another. Importantly, the Carrick team ask 'What is the question for which learning and teaching innovation is the answer?' There is some evidence, they suggest:

> '...that innovation is a more costly and less successful way of solving the problems of an organisation than would be the case if the funding were used for regeneration or renovation of existing practices.'

They also point out that:

> 'Most innovations would appear to be undertaken by individuals, although there is some evidence to suggest that these innovations rarely become embedded in the original context once the innovator ceases involvement. There is mixed evidence of the success of innovations conducted by discipline or faculty groups.'

So what do they suggest are the necessary conditions for successful dissemination in terms of adaptation, adoption and embedding? The ingredients comprise:

a) Being student-focused in departments that value teaching. Undoubtedly, one of the likely positive outcomes of the HEFCE CETL initiative will be the evidence that the inclusion of students in learning and teaching initiatives has a significant effect on their likely success.

b) Face-to-face contact is the most common way in which adopters learn about a project, including discussion with a colleague and participation in a workshop or conference where the project was showcased. Being invited to join a project is important, as was contact with Heads of Department and staff and educational developers. Very few people cited project web-sites as their sources of information, although national web-sites were considered useful. Importantly, none of the respondents in the research spontaneously cited learning object repositories as sources to find about projects or learning innovations. (A few interviewees mentioned the UK Subject Centres as sources but usually after previous contact through workshops or face-to-face contact).

c) Once adopters had become aware of it, engagement with a project was often based on a number of adopter perceptions including:

i)   the perceived relevance of the project (without having to adopt all of the innovative elements)
ii) prior personal interest in the particular learning and teaching ideas
iii) an appreciation of the scholarly aspect of the project based on their prior subject knowledge or knowledge of the expertise of the developer
iv) perceptions that the project would improve learning, including offering different and valuable ways of teaching compared with those typically used
v)   perceptions that the project would solve learning and teaching problems such as high failure rates
vi) perceptions that the project would provide valuable resources not otherwise available to the adopter.

d) Adopters might also have a personal interest in innovation.

Similarly, the Carrick research has identified the essential structural characteristics for successful adoption and adaptation. These include:

- Strong, proactive leadership to 'champion' the initiative and good leadership at all levels including departmental and course leadership. Such leadership often provides internal funding to resource the adoption/adaptation of innovation and, in doing so, demonstrates the value placed on engaging with innovation
- Successful embedding also occurs by providing effective support and advice, including staff development, for the new adopters
- Recognition and rewards for innovators was also seen to be an important way of demonstrating the value placed on innovative practice
- Ensuring that there is a climate of readiness for change:

  'Such a climate recognises the need for change, engages in reflective critique, supports risk-taking, has a responsive and dynamic policy system, values educational quality, engages in scholarly examination of its practice, recognises and rewards those engaged in enhancing teaching and learning and builds capability.' (Southwell et al., 2005:64)

- Comprehensive systems in institutions and funding bodies including reporting systems, planning systems and quality assurance. Above all, these include a funding design that encourages and supports risk-taking, change, and dissemination.

Comparisons with Carrick

In many ways the Carrick findings echo those to be found in other practitioner studies. For researchers in health, medicine and social care, the effective dissemination of new practices can mean the difference between life and death. As the National Centre for the Dissemination of Disability Research (2001) states:

'…the results and impact of your grant efforts rest in the effectiveness of your dissemination activities... dissemination should produce an effect – use of the information – on the part of the recipient.' (2001:1)

The report also stresses the importance of engaging with potential recipients at the outset of a project, noting that dissemination is a two-way process and any activity that relies on the originators simply telling other colleagues what they have done is unlikely to have lasting effect. This early engagement with potential users, we are told, is likely to be effective if we have a dissemination plan that includes:

- An orientation towards the real needs of the user rather than what we think they might need, and the presentation of information in a language preferred by the user
- Variation in dissemination methods, but including person-to-person contact
- Obviously, good communication flows to propose new things to potential users and react to their responses
- Drawing upon existing resources, relationships and networks as much as possible while building new resources
- Having some means of assuring the quality of the information is also important – any information about the innovative process or product should be accurate, relevant and representative of the user community
- There should be sufficient information that the user can determine the basic principles underlying specific practices and the settings where these practices may be used to best effect.

The key benefit of this research is to remind us that, while effective dissemination is based on engagement between developers and potential users, we must also examine the quality of the elements that comprise that engagement. For health and medical practitioners, a crucial aspect of effective dissemination is their ability not only to recognise the relevance and benefits of any new practice or product but also to be able to see tangible ways in which the intervention can be translated into their own practice.

Vital to this recognition is having readily available effectiveness data on the effects of the intervention, not just within the developer's context but also within users' contexts. Schoenwald and Hoagwood (2001) focus on the 'transportability' of an intervention, arguing that very little research has been done on identifying the parameters for successful migration. The successful transfer of a new and different practice might be affected by different staff outlooks, different settings and organisational routines, and different funding regimes. Furthermore, if the transfer does not succeed because one of these factors was overlooked, the recipient organisation might become opposed to any suggested new practice.

The concept of brokerage

One of the practices that can facilitate successful transfer is 'brokerage'. This is often discussed within a management

discourse, that of knowledge management and knowledge transfer. Brokerage locates dissemination firmly within a discussion about effective organisational change. For example, the Canadian Health Services state that:

> 'Knowledge brokering is about bringing people together, to help them build relationships, uncover needs, and share ideas and evidence that will let them do their jobs better. It is the human force that makes knowledge transfer (the movement of knowledge from one place or group of people to another) more effective.'

Their report goes on to describe the typical organisation where knowledge brokerage is likely to be successful; one which has the leadership and resource requirements already described, but also one where there is a collaborative environment and where there is a desire to build intellectual capital and to build the capacity of staff.

The basic skill set of an effective broker includes the ability:

- to bring people together and facilitate their interaction
- to find research-based and other evidence to shape decisions
- to assess evidence, interpret it, and adapt it to circumstances.

And the tasks of a broker include:

- bringing people together to exchange information and work together
- helping groups communicate and understand each other's needs and abilities
- pushing for the use of research in planning and delivering [practice]
- monitoring and evaluating practices, to identify successes or needed changes
- transforming management issues into research questions
- synthesising and summarising research and decision-maker priorities
- 'navigating' or guiding through sources of research.

Further, for brokerage to be successful, brokers themselves need support, including being able to participate in national networks. Jackson (2003) argues that brokerage and brokering are necessary and vital in facilitating change in UK higher education and, as he argues, at the heart of these knowledge transfer processes is engagement within socially complex communities.

The concept of engagement

The debate has shifted. The implication is clear. To be effective in transferring and embedding new practices and products the focus should be on facilitating engagement, not dissemination. It is to argue for an infusion model of transfer rather than a diffusion one; a model where there is a two-way engagement in developing new practices and where research and development of new practices are a part of the discourses of the different communities of practice

that can be found in higher education organisations. (See Beaudet *et al.* (2008) for a similar discussion in relation to the dissemination of scientific research.)

This is a view of the higher education organisation where innovation and embedded change occur within communities of practice where people are linked to each other through their involvement in common activities and where they are bound by mutual engagement. These communities of practice are likely to have a shared repertoire of resources and there is 'common ground' in relation to shared information and tacit knowledge. It is likely that the members are internally driven to find new practices to reach a mutual goal rather than being affected by external drivers. Change is likely to be evolutionary and the success of the community is based on the formal and informal relationships that have been built. As Hildreth and Kimble (2004) argue, communities of practice may themselves be linked to wider 'networks of practice' through which new ideas may be transferred. It is in these communities and networks of practice that the 'broker' can facilitate the discussion and exchange of new ideas.

By focusing on engagement within communities of practice, supported by brokers, many of the obstacles to successful dissemination might be avoided. Such obstacles include:

- Lack of training in understanding evidence-informed interventions
- Resistance following top-down support for an innovation
- Limited readiness for change
- Widely divergent formats needed to meet the needs of widely divergent communities
- Lack of clarity in relation to relevance to own needs
- Low level of perceived competence of developers
- Limited credibility of developers
- Suspicion in relation to motives for change
- Lack of sensitivity to user concerns
- Limited relationship to other sources trusted by users
- Low confidence in the quality of the research and evaluation of innovation
- Restricted comprehensiveness of innovation outcomes
- Non-user-friendly formats
- Costs of equipment to use innovation
- Lack of applicability to current concerns
- Cost effectiveness.

One might conclude, therefore, that a focus on brokerage, engagement, communities and networks of practice might facilitate the improved embedding of innovations in higher education and lead to new practices being more sustainable. There is, however, a need for more research, as ever, into the nature of successful practice transfer including successful brokerage and the whole nature of 'networks of practice'.

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The Student Learning and Teaching Network: bringing together students engaged in learning and teaching

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Introduction

The Student Learning and Teaching Network (formerly the CETL Student Network) is an informal community of students involved in learning and teaching activity supported by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). Since its formation in 2006 the student-led network has promoted students as active members of learning communities.

The Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (CHERI), on behalf of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), recently produced a report on student engagement in institutions across the UK. The report found three common rationales which inform institutional approaches to engaging students:

- 'enhancing the student experience', which recognises students as customers and values choice
- 'listening and being responsive', which seeks student opinion in order to nip problems and issues in the bud
- the development of 'learning communities', which seeks to engage students as owners or co-producers of their education.

(Little *et al.,* 2009:13)

Many CETLs, with their relative freedom and resources, have contributed to new ways of actively engaging students as owners and co-producers of their education. The Student Learning and Teaching Network brings together some of these innovative teaching and learning projects.

The development of the Network

The network began in March 2006, when a student intern at the Centre for Excellence in Enquiry-Based Learning (CEEBL) at the University of Manchester hosted a student-focused event. The Student Network committee emerged from the various discussions. It coordinates the Network, changes annually, and is made up entirely of volunteer students and recent graduates who are engaged in learning and teaching projects at their institutions.

The Network aims to:

- Promote students as valid and active members of learning communities
- Build student communities
- Share ideas and promote good practice.

Birmingham City University hosted an official launch event for the network at the start of 2007. Each of the 43

institutions represented were invited to showcase student-centred learning and teaching projects through poster presentations and discussion groups.

The changing nature of the Network

The Student Network now encourages and supports all students involved in learning and teaching to share their ideas and experiences. Through work with the HEA and the National Union of Students (NUS) we have broadened our membership to include student reps, mentors, and ambassadors as well as other students who wish to participate in a vibrant student-led community of learners.

Students and staff at the launch event

Case Studies

There are many ways in which students are involved in learning and teaching projects throughout the HE sector, including students:

- as researchers who undertake scholarly activity to develop learning and teaching
- with peer support roles, such as mentors and buddies
- supporting transition into HE, such as ambassadors
- involved in the design and use of learning spaces
- supporting staff through mentoring and learning resource development
- involved in the evaluation of CETLs and other learning and teaching activity
- whose CETLs or universities fund paid employment, sabbaticals or internships, for placements and secondments for learning and teaching activity.

Below we present case studies from three network members who describe their experiences of engagement with learning and teaching projects through the CETLs.

Emma Barnes, a student intern at the Centre for Excellence in Enquiry-Based Learning at the University of Manchester

I recently completed my undergraduate degree in Linguistics at Manchester and am really enjoying my masters in the same subject here. An Enquiry-Based Learning (EBL) course unit helped me to reconnect with my degree and I successfully applied to do an internship at CEEBL where I have been working to help both students and staff recognise the benefits of EBL.

I'd never been one of those students who asks questions in lectures and often I hadn't done the reading beforehand. This was never a problem though; I still enjoyed my degree by keeping my mind engrossed in areas of the course I liked, whilst getting good grades by rote-learning on the boring assessments. This tactic became less effective as assessment took up more time in my final year. I spent all my time studying to answer somebody else's questions, with less time to investigate areas which interested me. I felt disconnected from my course and unexceptional as a student. I put my MA application on hold – why put myself through another year of regurgitating somebody else's ideas to get marks?

I then did an Enquiry Based Learning course-unit. At first I was confused about what it meant; surely all learning is 'enquiry based'...? As I got used to group study based on questions and deadlines we'd set ourselves, I realised I was reconnecting with my course and beginning to enjoy what I'd learnt. Now my feedback was more than grades, it was the satisfaction of figuring something out. I became interested by how students can be empowered to learn so I applied to be an intern at CEEBL. Not everyone sees EBL

in the same way that I do so I was keen to find out how they do see it, what teaching and learning experiences they've had and how they can be improved as mine were.

I couldn't have asked for a better opportunity to get these opinions than at the CEEBL Student Voice Conference that CEEBL had been planning. The interns got well stuck into it; we were bursting with ideas for posters and themes for our March conference: What workshops will we provide? What will our student speakers speak about and what will the discussion groups discuss? And importantly, will we have bowls of sweets on every table?* We gathered feedback from guerrilla cameramen harassing people in the canteen on their opinions of EBL and their learning experiences generally. We also sent online questionnaires to everyone and anyone. We wanted as many student speakers as possible to discuss their learning experiences, how they learn best, which elements of group work they find useful, what challenges them and the best and worst aspects of their courses. The findings and the conference really helped to open up the debate on teaching practices to better include the opinions of students and I was excited to have the CEEBL and my fellow interns sharing this aim.

Working as an intern in partnership with staff at the university has given me so many opportunities to learn new skills and to practise skills I already have. I've really loved all the organisational aspects, such as the build-up to the Conference; the opportunities for training and to join in with workshops (for example, facilitation training) and even the chance to learn camera and editing skills. Mostly, I really enjoyed training for, and eventually leading, student focus groups. Liaising with students on behalf of academic staff really gave me a chance to see how different people like to learn, it helped me to understand the different ways in which people feel comfortable learning and gave me the chance to listen to students' frank opinions of their courses.

It was brilliant knowing that the feedback I had helped to get was being used to make changes on the course.

The focus groups alongside the questionnaires we ran before the SVC (we had over 1000 responses!) helped me to understand others' experiences of EBL; seeing the comments from those who had never experienced EBL furthered my belief in the principles which it advocates. Principles which to me, and to many of the students who responded to the questionnaire, are a natural and intuitive part of the way we learn. Being an intern with CEEBL has given me tried and tested methods to make sure these principles are being followed. In my work and further study I use these fundamental principles every day. As well as learning how to incorporate the principles of EBL into my day I have also learnt how to encourage others to systematically work through a task using EBL and I hope to continue to support the styles of learning which EBL encompasses for many years to come.

*Yes, we did have bowls of sweets on every table.

Jacqueline Rumbold, a student on placement at the Higher Education Learning Partnerships CETL at the University of Plymouth

As a placement student, I work as part of the Higher Education Learning Partnerships (HELP) CETL as the Project Assistant. The HELP CETL works to make higher education courses available in further education environments. Staff from different areas and disciplines are encouraged to come together and share methods of best practice. Individual and group research is both funded and supported by the HELP CETL to take forward and develop teaching HE in FE.

My main role is to support the Operations Manager with the day-to-day running of the CETL. Tasks include collating and writing for the quarterly newsletter, maintaining the website, organising meetings and keeping a financial audit trail. The experience that I have gained working as part of the HELP CETL has been invaluable. I have had the chance to work with a variety of people on a wide range of projects. The biggest project I undertook was being the co-organiser of the national conference 'HE in FE culture and experience: a partnership perspective'. Being involved in every aspect of the conference gave me an insight into events management and the skills required. The skills I have gained have prepared me for my final year and all that follows after.

The University of Plymouth offers lots of work placements to its own students every year. There are hundreds of students working on campus as part of their degree. Being able to work on campus is greatly beneficial for many students as they are already settled into the area and are familiar with the campus. By only allowing University of Plymouth students to take placements on campus, Plymouth ensures that its students have a good chance of securing a placement as it significantly reduces the amount of students they need to compete with in the job market. Both short term and year-long placements are available and these run across most departments.

As part of my role at the CETL I have been a committee member for the Student Learning and Teaching Network for nine months and it has been a fun and valuable experience, involving contributing to the website and editing the newsletter. The network has allowed me to see how different CETLs involve students in their work and how they have enhanced the student experience.

Being a placement student has taught me how to 'learn by doing'. My time management skills have improved vastly, prioritising tasks, occasionally having to share the workload, completing work quickly

and efficiently. This will help not only with my approach to future jobs, but also with tackling university assignments which I now feel I can approach with confidence.

Work placements are extremely beneficial to students as they are able to get that all-important 'experience' so many employers require. Work experience is not something that can be taught in the lecture theatre and many students finish their placements feeling more prepared to take on their final year of study with confidence.

Ina Maslejova, Bridges CETL Communications Officer at the University of Bedfordshire

I am a recent graduate and the Communications Officer at Bridges CETL based at the University of Bedfordshire. Bridges CETL supports the personal, academic and professional development of students through the undergraduate curriculum. The aim of the CETL is to bridge the gap between the higher education and the world after graduation.

My role is to design and co-ordinate the CETL's internal and external communications and to engage students and enhance their PDP and employability. To support this I set up 'U CRe8 Club' workshops led by students. In these sessions students are facilitated by other students to learn more about employability, creativity and technology which they are then able to use both within and outside their degree. A variety of workshops include Blogging, Podcasting, International Experience and Radio Management. Most sessions are presented by students reflecting on their knowledge and experiences. They provide students with a deeper insight into relevant subject areas and allow them to develop important skills such as communication and teamwork in a motivating and challenging environment.

Last summer myself, the Bridges Student Liaison Officer and two U CRe8 Club student speakers delivered a workshop on student engagement: 'Adding Extra to Employability' at the 'Staff-Student Collaborations: Partnerships within CETLs' conference hosted by the SLTN, in June 2008 at the University of Plymouth. The intended outcome of the workshop was to encourage participants to demonstrate skills with minimum preparation. It was the first time that any of my team had delivered a workshop at a conference.

The workshop's core comprised two activities: 'Match and Demonstrate' and 'Promote a Product', which aimed to help participants to understand the importance of demonstrating skills from a student perspective. Attendees were organised to work in teams and were asked to prepare, in a short time, a presentation to describe a suitable job role for a candidate with a mixture of particular skills: then, in the second activity, to promote a product which was given to the group ten minutes before presenting. Imagination, flexibility and good presentation skills played a huge role in this workshop.

As a student team we were a bit scared when we began to prepare the workshop, wondering 'How will it run? How will people perceive it?' but I was happy to see that students and staff enjoyed our work and took something away to their CETLs. We also learned a lot from the experience, particularly how to manage workshops, the importance of giving clear instructions to people, how to time manage to get things delivered in the time provided and how to communicate effectively. As a team our self-confidence really increased through taking part in the conference and we learned a number of lessons that will inform the way we present future workshops.

Promoting students as valid and active members of learning communities

In order to support and build communities among students engaged in learning and teaching activity, the Student Network holds a number of events and workshops for students and interested staff. Examples include:

Informal events for students

A Student Network event, hosted by the Reinvention Centre and Capital Centre, two CETLs based at the University of Warwick, was an informal networking event designed to celebrate the achievements of students working with CETLs. The two-day student-only workshop focused on the benefits of student engagement for students, CETLs and institutions, providing students with the opportunity to reflect, share experiences and identify their own actions to take back to their institutions. The event was guided and shaped by the students through the use of 'stem sentences' as part of the first session.

Students valued an event at which they could network with other students in similar roles without a staff presence. It provided a safe and productive space for students to articulate their ideas about learning and teaching and empowered students to return to their individual institutions with a support network made up of students with a similar passion for learning.

Students at the Reinvention Centre, University of Warwick

A conference for students and staff

The 'Staff-Student Collaboration: Partnerships within CETLs' event was held at Plymouth University and offered a more traditional conference style. Student Network members who had attended previous student-only events suggested that they would value an opportunity to invite key academic staff from their institutions to present joint workshops to illustrate their learning partnership and collaborative work. Staff and students representing 28 CETLs attended.

A number of collaborative initiatives were showcased, representing a wide variety of topics such as student enterprise, writing mentors, peer support on placement and students as researchers. As can be seen in Ina's case study, it provided many students with their first experience of presenting at a conference. Students and staff valued the opportunity to learn about other learning and teaching projects and to 'try out' some of the activities developed by CETLs. In particular, the networking opportunities broke down some traditional barriers and enabled informal discussion to take place between students and staff, valuing their individual expertise on learning and teaching:

> *'The opportunity to engage with peers and staff from other universities and establish what problems they encountered and, more importantly, how they were overcome, was invaluable, it gave a new perspective.'*
> (Student delegate)

Workshops for the dissemination of L&T initiatives

The Student Network currently promotes a series of open workshops hosted by individual CETLs which aim to share and disseminate the CETL's specific expertise. The workshops, such as 'Introduction to Film Production', 'The Student Digital Slam' and 'Academic Writing Made Easier', are designed so that students leave with tangible knowledge that can be applied to their own studies. Details of past and future workshops are featured on our website (http://studentlandtnetwork.ning.com/).

These and other events have supported and contributed to the development of a vibrant network through which students are able to share experiences, advice, suggestions and achievements and develop ongoing collaborations. The Network provides a community

of like-minded individuals who can encourage, support and enthuse others to engage actively in learning and teaching. The next conference, a student-only event, will be held in Manchester this coming November and will seek to engage students in discussion about taking an active role in Higher Education today.

Network students at the GEES Subject Centre conference 2009

What does 'active student engagement in learning communities' mean for the network?

Recent research by the NUS suggests that students themselves would value engagement at a deeper level. While only:

> *'...23% of students feel involved in shaping the content, curriculum or design of their course, 57% said that they wanted such involvement.'*
> (NUS, 2008:28)

This indicates a need and a desire among students for a more active approach to the engagement of students in learning and teaching at a local level, an approach which the Network has sought to promote and model. For engagement at a deeper

level to take place there is a need for institutions to develop communities willing to embrace students as active agents in their education.

McMillan and George (1986) outlined four conditions necessary for strong, committed communities:

- Membership
- Influence
- Fulfilment of individual needs
- Shared events and connections.

The Student Network has worked hard to foster a sense of inclusive community that seizes on and develops these four aspects. As part of a learning community students within the Network are supported to become empowered producers of their own education, rather than consumers of an educational product. To this end, the Student Network has worked to develop a space in which students with a shared passion for the transformation of teaching and learning can explore successes, as well as issues and fears, with like-minded individuals to promote and develop students as equal collaborators in Higher Education.

The future for the Student Network

Over the next year the Network will be working to:

- Ensure the sustainability of the network
- Promote the website as a vibrant and accessible hub of information
- Promote students as

independent, autonomous beings able to shape their learning experiences
- Provide our members with the opportunity to be part of an active and vibrant learning community through workshops and events.

Contact

All students and interested staff are welcome to join the Network and become members of our active web community (http://studentlandtnetwork.ning.com/). The website showcases student engagement in learning and teaching, offers opportunity for discussion and features our upcoming events. The Student Network committee can be contacted *via* cetlstudents@gmail.com.

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From Research to Recognition: mentoring for staff at Liverpool John Moores University

Rach Boulter, Liverpool John Moores University and **Professor Diana Eastcott,** External HE Consultant

'When people become academics, especially if they are doing so after working in industry, government or the professions, they often mistakenly believe that knowledge of their subject is all that is required to be a successful academic. In fact they are taking on the mantle of an entire profession, replete with its own vocabulary, its own research traditions and its own scholarly literature.' (Candy, 1996:13)

Introduction: mentoring as a component of professional learning

'Mentoring…is increasingly used…for the professional and personal development of learners, bringing enormous benefits to them, their mentors and their organisations alike.' (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002:1)

Mentoring is used in a range of contexts and has a variety of definitions and meanings in Higher Education (HE). Studies by Knight and Trowler (1999) and Knight, Tait and Yorke (2006) demonstrate the importance of mentoring alongside formal courses in the effective professional learning of new academic staff. Knight, Tait and Yorke's (2006) view of professional learning is that it is both systemic and situated, with the development of capabilities occurring as a result of situated social practices. In this context the mentor has an important part to play in assisting the development of relevant values and competencies. Furthermore, mentoring may be effective when working in rapidly changing environments (Carnell *et al.,* 2006).

The process of mentoring is explicit within the UK Professional Standards Framework, with individuals working at Standard Descriptor 3 (SD3) expected to have an 'established track record in promoting and mentoring colleagues' (UKPSF, 2006:4). Mirroring Parsloe and Wray's (2000) characterisation, staff at SD3 should be using their skills and experience to positively 'influence' the working practices of those at SD1 and 2. The challenge for organisations is in providing a framework to direct this influence, harnessing expertise for the development of others. This article focuses on the process of developing a university-wide mentoring programme at Liverpool John Moores University.

Stage One: research and strategic decisions as part of Professional Standards development work

Research into existing development routes and opportunities for staff took place in 2006/7 when a group of 21 staff (new and more experienced Lecturer/Senior Lecturers and Programme Leaders) were interviewed to ascertain their experience of induction at LJMU. This research showed that support for new staff was often impromptu and lacked consistency and that directed support (for example, through mentoring) for staff moving into new roles within the organisation was not standard practice. The LJMU approach to Professional Standards is intrinsically linked to the employee life cycle and, in order to ensure that staff were being sufficiently supported, a strategic decision was taken to firm up the organisation's approach to induction. Revision of the University's induction guidance was complemented by the creation of a Working Group to identify ways in which the process of mentoring could be developed to enhance the experience of staff in new roles at LJMU.

Stage Two: impetus and focus through the Mentoring Working Group

The Mentoring Working Group consisted of a range of staff from across the University, all of whom supported learning and teaching (e.g. lecturers, programme leaders, school directors, library staff and staff from both the Centre for Staff Development (CSD) and Learning Development Unit (LDU)). An external HE Consultant worked with the group providing strategic guidance and advice to help steer proposals.

The Working Group used the 2007 research and the extensive literature on the benefits of mentoring and coaching in professional learning and development as its starting point. The research had already found some positive responses to mentoring at LJMU from staff, for example:

From a mentee:

> *'Being mentored was the quickest way for me to get up to speed with the way the systems worked. You've got no idea of the importance of timings when you are new, you're quite reliant on having someone else there to help you with that…you do quite rely on your mentor in your first year…I visited mine a lot.'*
> (Lecturer/Senior Lecturer new to HE)

As well as advantages for mentees, the Working Group was keen to disseminate the potential benefits for the organisation. The University aims to increase staff satisfaction to 80% or above by 2012 (LJMU Strategic Plan 2007-2012). Ensuring an effective support model for new staff can only have a positive impact on such a target. Mentoring can also contribute to succession planning and is a core element of the LJMU approach to Professional Standards – a process through which staff can plan their development through the set of Standard Descriptors.

Interviews suggested considerable development opportunities for the mentor and the potential to gain a great deal of personal satisfaction from the role – knowing that their input

has made a difference to a colleague and taking pride in mentees' achievements (Clutterbuck, 2004):

> *'Sounds a bit twee – but almost like self-satisfaction, which for me personally is a key motivator in my job. I like to know I have done a good job and this idea of making a difference. Ultimately, it makes our job easier because it's a really efficient way of working…you are supporting, you are there as a motivator and sounding board.'* (Mentor)

The mentor role prompts reflection on one's own practice; 'explaining concepts to someone else is a good way to reinforce good practice in oneself' (Clutterbuck, 2004:43):

> *'I volunteered for [mentoring] because the person who came in had similar interests to me in teaching…so there is mutual benefit there…you are discussing ideas and innovative things in relation to the subject matter. That's the main benefit.'* (Mentor)

Mentoring provides the opportunity to develop new skills, abilities and insights in preparation for, and during, the mentoring relationship and as such can be 'a valuable means of delaying 'plateauing'' (Clutterbuck, 2004:32), providing fresh challenges:

> *'As well as hopefully helping them, this has been of benefit to me too as it has enabled me to recognise my own experience and expertise, and to realise how far I've come since I was a new member of staff. It has also encouraged me to seek further staff development in the mentoring area as I have found it an interesting and satisfying experience.'* (Mentor)

Having considered research findings the Mentoring Working Group identified four key objectives for a mentoring scheme which were to:

- improve the induction experience of full and part-time staff new to LJMU (UKPSF Standard Descriptor 1 and 2)

- provide professional development for established staff in identifying promotional or career opportunities (UKPSF Standard Descriptor 1, 2 and 3)

- assist Programme Leaders in preparing for the role and to provide on-going support for this and similar roles in leading and managing teaching and learning (UKPSF Standard Descriptor 3)

- support and recognise the contribution of mentors and mentees to continuous professional development and to the achievement of LJMU's strategic objectives (UKPSF Standard Descriptor 1, 2 and 3).

Given the range of perspectives, definitions, and these four key objectives coupled with the energy and commitment of the Working Group the way forward was established. Ultimately, the Working Group decided to prioritise mentoring for new full-time academic staff and a pilot scheme started in January 2009.

Stage Three: mentoring in practice through the pilot mentoring scheme

Running a pilot scheme helped to identify the features of a formalised mentoring scheme at LJMU. Pilots themselves 'help you to avoid many a pitfall that, if occurring on a larger scale, could be very costly…' (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002:221).

The Working Group selected a definition of mentoring and a pilot framework appropriate to the HE context. The group felt that the key to the framework was flexibility, so a semi-formal mentoring framework was deployed, complemented by a definition that focused on the development of knowledge.

Mentoring for new academic staff at LJMU is:

> *'…off-line help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking.'* (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 1998:35)

Aspects of a semi-formalised mentoring framework:

- **Measurement:** for benefit of programme and individuals
- **Recording:** recorded notes kept by mentee
- **Agenda:** determined by mentee and mentor
- **Programme management:** scheme co-ordinator and peer support

    (adapted from Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002)

The group worked on developing a series of resources which formed a **Mentor Resource Guide:**
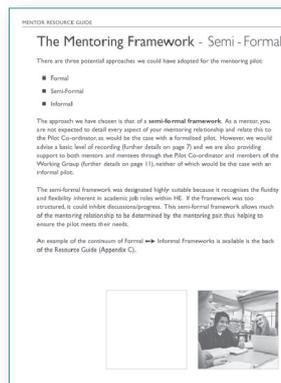
The guide included advice on how to establish ground rules with your mentor; a series of 'Frequently Asked Questions' regarding frequency of meetings, confidentiality, *etc.;* a set of 'Discussion Prompts' covering various aspects of starting life in a new workplace (e.g. car parking, computing *etc.*) and a series of Case Studies which mentors could explore with their mentees as appropriate.

The Mentors

An advert was put out on the LJMU web and in various training facilities around the

LJMU campuses, asking for volunteer mentors for the pilot.

Over 20 volunteers from a range of disciplines came forward. Volunteers were not required to have any mentoring experience but had to attend a half-day briefing session, where more information about their responsibilities as a mentor was provided.

The Briefing Session

It was always the intention of the group to provide training/briefing for those staff taking part in the pilot. The briefing, jointly delivered by the external HE advisor, a Staff Development Advisor from CSD and the Mentor Co-ordinator, provided training for those taking part in the pilot with a view to '…direct, support and enhance the potential for positive mentoring experiences.' (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002:254). The briefings were tailored to the group's needs *via* completion of a short questionnaire prior to attendance which addressed the level of mentoring experience and what each participant hoped to get out of the sessions.

While mentors needed to be aware of the prescribed definition and framework for their mentoring activities, a formal 'training' event would have been too structured and not in keeping with the semi-formalised mentoring approach we were advocating. Therefore, while presenting information about the pilot, the briefing also gave volunteers the opportunity to work through some of the case studies within the Mentor Resource Guide. Feedback from the volunteers indicated that they found this a useful activity, helping them to focus on the practical strategies they would employ to support their mentee.

The Matching

The matching was co-ordinated centrally by the Mentor Co-ordinator from LDU. When a new member of staff started work at LJMU, they were informed about the pilot and asked whether they wanted to take part. Where possible, mentors were matched with mentees from their own subject discipline but this was not always practical. So, in some instances, mentors were matched with new staff within the same Faculty but not necessarily the same School.

Evaluation

The evaluation is to be carried out by the Mentor Co-ordinator at the six-month point of each relationship. Mentors and mentees will be interviewed individually to ascertain their experience of the mentoring relationship. The findings of this evaluation and any associated recommendations will be fed back to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Panel to ensure that the work receives strategic support.

Stage Four: the opportunity to gain recognition for mentoring

A key area which the Working Group felt was important was *recognition* of the mentor role as something which positively contributes to the development of others. A SEDA Action Research Award – Mentoring has been developed by the Mentor Coordinator and the external HE Consultant for Recognition by SEDA in July 2009. The Programme is already over-subscribed and will start in October 2009.

The future for mentoring at LJMU?

With both the pilot and the new mentoring award, we hope to continue to contribute to the development of a mentoring culture at LJMU. It is important for the socialisation of new staff that mentoring is viewed as the 'norm' – a standard part of induction; mentoring is '...least effective when viewed as a 'new initiative' rather than a natural process and part of normal behaviour at work.' (Garvey *et al.,* 2009:55).

The Working Group will start work on another of its key objectives, mentoring support for mid-career academics, in Autumn 2009.

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Book Reviews

Informal Learning: a New Model for Making Sense of Experience

Lloyd Davies

Gower, 2008

ISBN: 978-0-566-08857-5

'What and Why and When and How and Where and Who?'

Learning can be one of the most enjoyable facets of being human, so to know how we learn is very important. Lloyd Davies' attempt to bring ideas about learning to the general public is therefore to be admired. The title for this review article was prompted by the author's use of Rudyard Kipling's famous poem 'The Elephant's Child'; Davies uses it as a prompt for the way in which self-directed questions tend to open up subjects, drawing out facts and ideas. I applied these questions as I read the book, but frequently found myself losing the thread as the author darts between a myriad of learning examples.

As educational development is concerned with embedding new and good practice within the Teaching and Learning scenario, I was quite excited to read on the flyer for this book that it 'offered a sea-change in the way we all learn'. As a scientist by training, I was particularly excited by the fact that it was presented diagrammatically and looked a fun and easy read compared to many texts in the field. However, this excitement didn't last too long – in fact, by the end of Chapter 1, I was feeling distinctively uncomfortable. Comments such as *déjà-vu* and 'reinventing the wheel' began flashing through my mind. But the book is aimed at a general rather than an academic audience, so I soldiered on.

In Chapter 1, Davies outlines the difference between structured teaching in the developed world, based on what the teacher teaches as opposed to learning from experience – when we decide whether to learn. He introduces the concepts of using experience to reinforce that which is good and that which is bad and how our own and others' perceptions impact on this. In Chapter 2, he offers a brief review of the big players in experiential learning, including Kolb, Honey and Mumford, Boud, Keogh and Walker and Jarvis. This is followed in Chapter 3 by the outline of Davies' 'new' model. This can be summarised as Kolb plus extras *i.e.* a model that looks at emotions and other people's perceptions. The following chapters then attempt to discuss each of the elements of the new model in greater detail, with innumerable and often pretty mundane case scenarios. Throughout the book these are somewhat over-used and can confuse rather than reinforce the intended point.

The most positive experience from this book is provided by Chapter 11 on Reflection and Insight. This brings together some sound basic points regarding learning and touches on one of the key concerns for society – how to encourage and lay the right foundations for creativity. However, it tends to lose something from the way it is written – almost conversational and with the style of the positive thinking books so popularised in the States and available in most airports! Indeed, as a 'holiday read' book with observations on experiential learning it works quite well. Who knows, some of us may even have Eureka moments whilst parallel processing sub-consciously beside our respective pools – what better outcome from reading 'Informal Learning' than that!

Dr Denise V. Dear, Academic Development Consultant, University of Cambridge.

Comparative and International Education: an introduction to theory, method, and practice

David Philips and Michele Schweisfurth

Continuum, 2006

ISBN: 978-1847060594

The activities that constitute the study of international education are to some extent based on knowledge of comparative education, which in turn applies historical, social science and philosophical theories and methods to international problems in education. The book begins by making clear the relationship between these two fields, perceived as separate but in fact intrinsically linked. This discussion leads into the second chapter, which continues by exploring how comparative education has developed as a concept over time.

Later in the book the authors discuss the relationship between education and national development, providing the reader with a basic introduction to concepts such as economic, social, and human development, and how theory (such as modernisation theory, liberation theory, and correspondence and reproduction theories) can link such development with education. The book also discusses methodological approaches in comparative and international education research, and how comparative studies have been both informative and progressive in the way they have taught us about many issues in education (e.g. processes of transitions, post-conflict education, *etc.*).

Reading this book will provide you with a solid grounding in the principles of comparative and international education, and will equip you with a better understanding of the theory and practice that lies behind these terms. It is an in-depth and specialised text suitable for education professionals; others may benefit from a more general introduction to theories and methods of studying education.

Dr Sue Wilkinson, Senior Developer, Portsmouth University

Connectivism: a network theory for teaching and learning in a connected world

Frances Bell, University of Salford

Introduction

(The references in this article have been converted into TinyUrls – please use http://tinyurl.com/xxxxx)

In little more than ten years, in higher education, we have witnessed progress whereby connecting students and staff to people and resources online is not only a possibility in our place of study or work, but is now commonplace in our homes and even on our journey to and from university. In 1998, 9% of UK homes had access to the Internet, compared with 61% in 2007 (84% of which had broadband access) *(ay4qal).*

In 2007, 40% of recent Internet users had used mobile access to the Internet, 22% of them using hand held devices or mobile phones *(237cgb).* Sales of the iPhone alone generated over 1 million mobile Internet users by February 2009 *(maoyaa).* The implications of this for learning and teaching are that Internet devices are often available during teaching and learning activities, giving students and teachers access to global resources and online tools and services.

Web 2.0 is often seen as a hype term *(nx36fj)* but can most simply be thought of as a read/write web where users produce web content (in the form of text, images, sound and video) as well as consume it through online services. An example of such a service is a Wordle (see Figure 1), created by the online service at www.wordle.net, where text input is visualised with word size being related to its prominence within the text. Although composed of words, this gives a visual representation of the ideas within the text of this article.

Figure 1. Wordle of text of this article (mnlacl)

Genres of media tools such as blogs and wikis are freely available as online services, enabling individuals and groups to share and publish media, connected by links and 'feeds' that allow us to monitor sources that interest us rather than relying solely on Internet searches. If we watch out for the orange buttons (that signify RSS feeds) on pages that interest us we

Figure 2. RSS Orange button

can follow the content as it changes. A good way to start is to experiment with news feeds from the BBC web site *(guhkw).*

The video 'A Vision of Students Today', created by Mike Wesch in collaboration with 200 of his students, gives us an insight into the role that Internet connection plays in the work and social lives of students *(yq4oyp).* The ubiquity of Internet access has implications for students and staff – our challenge is how to work and learn effectively in the changed environment in which we find ourselves.

Connectivism – the theory

There are two key proponents of the theory of connectivism, Stephen Downes and George Siemens. Downes works in the areas of online learning, content syndication and new media for the National Research Council Institute for Information Technology in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada (http://downes.ca). He characterises connective knowledge as interactive, knowledge of a connection within a network (Downes, 2005). Siemens is Associate Director of the Learning Technologies Centre at the University of Manitoba. He has worked with learners and employees in global business and education environments *(6wx53q).* Both espouse the openness and interpretive nature of knowledge and the connectedness of learning online, and model connected online learning and knowledge sharing through their blogs and web sites.

Siemens proposes connectivism as a learning theory for the digital age, a successor to behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism (Siemens, 2004). He maintains that these earlier theories are limited by: their intrapersonal view of learning; their failure to address the learning that is located within technology and organisations and their lack of contribution to the value judgments that are necessary in knowledge-rich environments. The concept of network is prominent in the theory of connectivism that views knowledge as a flow through a network of humans and non-humans (artifacts). A network comprises connections between entities (nodes), where the nodes can be individuals, groups, systems, fields, ideas, resources or communities. Siemens sets a bold research agenda around the sharing of cognitive tasks between people and technology; coping with rapid change in the 'information ecology'; and the impact of theories of networks, complexity and chaos. He has also established a set of principles for connectivism (see Figure 3).

- Learning and knowledge rests in diversity of opinions
- Learning is a process of connecting specialised nodes or information sources
- Learning may reside in non-human appliances
- Capacity to know more is more critical than what is currently known
- Nurturing and maintaining connections is needed to facilitate continual learning
- Ability to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts is a core skill
- Currency (accurate, up-to-date knowledge) is the intent of all connectivist learning activities
- Decision-making is itself a learning process. Choosing what to learn and the meaning of incoming information is seen through the lens of a shifting reality. While there is a right answer now, it may be wrong tomorrow due to alterations in the information climate affecting the decision.

Figure 3. Principles of connectivism

In 2006 Downes outlined a controversial distinction between groups and networks in a moving blog post *(4p5xj4),* and presented this in a more formal way in this presentation in New Zealand *(3r5cnj).* His distinctions between groups and networks are summarised in Figure 4.

Group emphasises	Network emphasises
Sameness	Diversity
Order and control	Autonomy
Borders and membership	Openness
Additive, cumulative knowledge	Emergent knowledge

Figure 4. Downes' Dimensions of Difference between Groups and Networks

This distinction can be challenging for those immersed in social constructivism but is interpreted liberally by many, including Siemens. Social constructivism emphasises the role of culture and context in the construction of knowledge *(nxeeh9).* In fact, the term 'community' is often used in discussions of connectivism, and it is clear that sometimes it is social networks that are being discussed rather than the networks of human and non-human appliances.
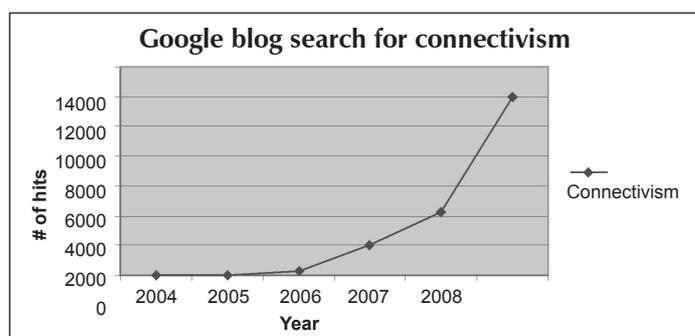

Google blog search for connectivism

Figure 5. Growth of interest in Connectivism

Figure 5 indicates the growing interest in connectivism in the blogosphere, further underlined by participation in a free online course in 2008 (See next section).

Learning about Connectivism

Connectivism and Connective Knowledge (CCK08) was an online course offered by the University of Manitoba from September 8, 2008 – November 30, 2008 to '...outline a connectivist understanding of educational systems of the future'. The course details stress the transformational aspects of learning technologies and the need to explore the underlying reasons for change *(lj67l3).*

The course was free to all comers and some, but not all, were assessed. Indeed, only a small minority enrolled for credit. Two thousand two hundred students enrolled in total, hundreds became active participants, 24 were graded by the University of Manitoba and one by their own institution. The course materials were presented and participants contributed through a range of channels including wiki, forums on Moodle (an Open Source Virtual Learning Environment), blogs, Elluminate (an online classroom with video chat, and shared interactive board), a channel on UStream.tv, Second Life, and a variety of web resources. All of these were integrated via a daily newsletter, and aggregation conducted via the CCK08 tag. Siemens and Downes have provided their own analyses of technologies and other aspects (see *awvfqa* and *c3df7q).*

Based on my own participation, the course was about creative dialogue, people strengthening their links with resources and, more importantly, with each other as they cited each other's contributions and included fellow students on their blog rolls.

> *'At its heart, connectivism is the thesis that knowledge is distributed across a network of connections, and therefore that learning consists of the ability to construct and traverse those networks.'* (5rgc8t)

Most participants were involved in formal (across sectors from primary to higher education) and informal education. Participation was global though the intensity of the discussion on the forums must have been demanding for those for whom English is not a first language. There were pockets of participation in other languages and some of the resources have been translated into Spanish. The course will be open again in September 2009, and is an excellent way to learn about and *experience* connectivism.

Connectivism for teaching and learning

The attractiveness and accessibility of the theory of connectivism makes it a good candidate for structuring innovation by educators in their practice. Participants on CCK08 had the opportunity to experiment with connecting their thoughts and ideas across blogs and discussion forums, reflecting on and discussing what worked and did not work for them. Effectively, they were modelling behaviours that they may wish to encourage in their students. They were participating in an extensive *public* knowledge network of people, blogs, wikis and other activities and resources that they could use as examples for their students. In other words, educators used connectivism to frame their own learning.

An interesting question arises as to whether or not the theory would also be of use to learners in higher education. An excellent example is the video by Wendy Drexel, based on her high school students' project on connectivism

(5cyjca). This video is now being used by other educators and students, to help them learn about connectivism. An educator who wishes their students to make effective use of connected social media will be giving them models, examples and activities. Presented in an appropriate form, a model of connectivism that puts the student in the network could be of great use to them.

Implications for Higher Education
Educators becoming critical experimenters with new tools and services
One of the benefits of experimentation with social media becoming more widespread is that pragmatic, critical users can identify what are effective and sound academic uses rather than using technology for its novelty value.

Extending the range of media in which students submit (and even publish) their work
Not only can students seek out sources on different media, they can also submit work in different formats. Even if we are not ready to replace essays with videos, we could use blogs or photo workbooks to record process for reflective reports or journals (for different ways of recording project work – *c7lf73*).

Encouraging and supporting students to move beyond institutional boundaries
One implication of students becoming connected learners is that learning will neither be confined to the physical classroom nor to the virtual classroom, within the institutional Virtual Learning Environment. Students will be consuming and producing social media 'in the wild', whether we like it or not. Rather than seeing this as a problem, we can engage with students as they acquire the 21st century Learning Skills that are needed to make effective use of technologies that are emerging for use within classrooms and the workplace (Educause, 2008).
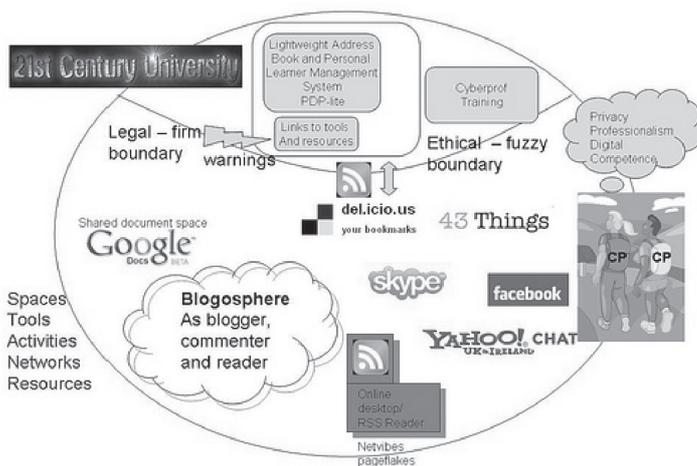

Figure 6. Shifting boundaries in technology provision (l4oj36)

The boundary shift between institutional and external web services manifests itself to the university in two ways (see Figure 6). Conscious of legal issues and responsibilities (as university Information Services departments often are), the university will want to make students aware as they cross the hard boundary between university-provided resources and services and the World Wide Web. On the other hand, ethically, as educators we can regard that boundary as soft,

and offer support (by way of digital literacy support activities) to students who, while being responsible for their own actions, are becoming scholars and ultimately professionals who can act effectively online.

Making educational resources more openly available
Another implication of the connectivist approach is that we expect to find resources that are open and available to use, often with Creative Commons Licenses that let us share, create and remix media legally (http://creativecommons.org). For example, I have published the image (created by me) on the photos sharing site http://www.flickr.com using a Creative Commons License so that I (and you) can use it legally in any non-commercial publication.

Conclusions
A benefit of connectivism is that, as Cormier (2008) recommends, it is allowing a community of people (working with learning technologies) to legitimise what they are doing. Educators wishing to extend the use of social media within their practice can refine and spread knowledge more quickly through membership of multiple communities.

So what are the steps that an educator who wishes to adopt connectivism can take?

1. Follow the blogs of those who innovate with educational technologies
2. Experiment (within your comfort zone) with web services and tools that might enrich teaching and learning in your practice
3. Use, publish and share resources through blogs, wikis, photo and video sharing sites
4. Encourage students to use the web for scholarly resources – being critical and selective, and attributing sources
5. Assign student activities that enable effective use of media to report process and, where appropriate, outcomes
6. Make explicit the concept of connectivism in student support activities so that they can exploit it in their own independent learning.

Some useful resources
Stephen Downes Online Daily – a daily newsletter of education technology resources *(l64y6)*
George Siemens's Connectivism site *(kjtpvh)*
Blogging for teachers and students, made easy *(ytgznw)*
Jane Hart's e-learning pick of the day *(4sqodh)*

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SEDA Conference perspectives

SEDA EXPRESSIONS – Impressions of a SEDA conference delegate

(Brighton 2009)

Fiona Meddings, University of Bradford

As a relative novice in terms of educational development I relished the opportunity to attend the Spring SEDA conference in Brighton. I anticipated that I would be amongst like-minded individuals and was also excited at visiting a part of the country that I had not ventured to before. I have to say that I was not disappointed, at least on the one part.

The conference itself was meticulously organised; in fact, there was often time to spare to catch one's breath between paper presentations, which indeed was a novel experience. So often at conferences you are rushing between sessions, arrive late and miss some of the context and therefore find it difficult to take part in the discussions. What I did find interesting, however, was that although delegates seemed friendly I felt a little less credible when I said that I was from 'practice'. It seemed to be not the done thing to be a practising lecturer.

I felt that the interesting mix of delegates had one thing in common – they did not see themselves as practitioners but as 'educational developers', as though somehow to be a practitioner was not to be in the same league. Not that for a moment I considered that practitioners and developers should be in competition, however 'premier league' and the 'championship' sprung to mind. Whilst I have the utmost respect for those who have much more experience and knowledge than I do, I feel that being at the 'coalface' has its rewards as well as its heartaches, and that being there enables me to put some of the theory to the test. In a number of the sessions I wondered whether the developer had been near a 'coalface' for a while and what they would do once they got there.

In a way it disheartens me to express such an opinion. Colleagues from my Midwifery background would voice similar opinions in relation to those of us who have deserted their 'coalface'. What may be interesting to ponder is that although I no longer participate in professional clinical practice, that very practice shapes who I am as a lecturer, it shapes my thoughts on teaching, learning and assessment and it is through this lens that I come to educational development. I am glad and unashamed that I still practice.

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Reflections on the 'Conference that Cares'

(Brighton 2009)

David White, University of Oxford

Attending the SEDA conference in Brighton was an intriguing experience for me. There was something in the atmosphere that I had trouble tuning into, something which pervaded every session but which I couldn't pin down. Until, at the end of the first day, I had a sudden moment of clarity; the mysterious and all-pervading dimension to this conference that was evading me was the fact that these people really care about what they do.

The first clue was an impassioned keynote from Ronald Barnett, Emeritus Professor of Higher Education at the Institute of Education. This was a presentation from someone who believed in education and had a real feeling for the emotive realities that students face, pulling out terms such as 'anxiety', 'excitement' and 'scary' from student quotes. In my opinion we often forget the emotional roller-coaster learning can be and how that 'ride' is integral to the experience rather than something that should be entirely ironed out. In tension with this notion is the challenge that tertiary education continues to face under an implicit acceptance of 'students as consumers'. This topic was not shied away from, leading to a pithy debate on Twitter which included the plea: 'We must kill off this idea before it kills us off'.

The importance of not allowing educational research and teaching practice to continue to diverge was a key theme which suffused the conference. This trend is to the detriment of both groups who need to learn from each other. It seemed clear to me that institutions should do more to create roles which are less segregated, roles that sit under the larger banner of 'academic practice' that can denote research and teaching. The challenges inherent in making this happen was an area which I touched upon in my session entitled 'Not Killing the Creative'. I reflected on the methods employed (some more successfully than others) in the recent JISC funded 'Open Habitat' project, methods which attempted to make the overlap in the centre of the 'educational researcher' and 'teaching practitioner' Venn diagram as wide as possible.

The majority of the SEDA delegates are in professional positions which act as a bridge between the highest tiers of policy making and the teaching/research (there's that problem again) staff within universities. These are the people who have the ability to embed new teaching and learning strategies and to influence culture change within tertiary education. It was refreshing to hear the closing thoughts in the opening keynote including the phrases 'We need to play the game' and 'We have to be subversive'. If institutional approaches are to be improved from within then a subversive playing of the game by people who care is exactly what is needed.

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'Teaching Enhancement and Student Success' – the new funding model for Teaching Enhancement and Widening Participation: implications and strategies for the future

Liz Shrives, SEDA Co-Chair and **John Hilsdon,** Chair ALDinHE

A lively one-day conference organised jointly by SEDA and the Association for Learning Development in Higher Education (ALDinHE) was held on 4th December 2008 at the University of Reading. The event, which explored the potential impact and challenges of the proposed new funding arrangements, attracted some 75 delegates from a wide range of roles in HE. Organisations such as 'Aimhigher', 'Higher Futures' and 'Volunteering England' were also represented.

Given changes in the economic climate and shifting priorities, it is unsurprising that HEFCE intends to change the way it funds teaching enhancement and widening participation (WP). Nonetheless, the current proposals have created anxiety surrounding:

- combining funding for improving retention, learning, teaching and assessment strategies, and teaching informed and enriched by research, creating a new allocation to support teaching enhancement and student success

- increasing the funding for widening access by transferring the funding for improving retention

- changes to the formula which determines the funding for widening access to acknowledge the costs of working in the most disadvantaged areas.

In effect, the previous Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF) and widening participation/supporting student learning grant would in the future be allocated as one fund, the Teaching Enhancement and Student Success (TESS), thereby requiring institutions to reconsider how they resource existing activities and to look for synergies and efficiencies. The conference provided the opportunity to explore the impact of the change, and to consider how to ensure that widening participation, student support, learning development or educational development would not be compromised through a reduction in funding and the removal of formal means of accountability to the funding body.

Heather Fry, newly appointed Director of Learning and Teaching at HEFCE, suggested in her keynote speech that institutions need to carefully consider the relationship between teaching enhancement activities and those activities previously pulled together under a 'widening participation' umbrella *i.e.* access, retention, AimHigher, volunteering and learning development or academic support for students.

HE consultant David Gosling focused on the potential impact of TESS on Educational Development, particularly dedicated units within universities. Referring to the work of those in learning development, widening participation and related fields, David provided an interesting, if sometimes stark, picture of the interdependence

between ring-fenced funding and the sustainability of development initiatives in institutions.

Andrea Rannard, Senior Student Volunteer Manager with Volunteering England, made an eloquent plea for consideration of the unintended consequences of the funding in relation to the impressive work that universities have been doing in promoting and increasing involvement in volunteering. As volunteering grows it is fast becoming an expectation in some curriculum areas, with clear tangible benefits for students (and staff).

Peter Hartley considered the implications of the funding proposals for Student Support and Learning Development. Peter is Head of Teaching and Quality Enhancement at the University of Bradford and he provided a personal commentary on the important interface between the support provided for students and the sometimes inflated promises of policy.

The morning concluded with all the presenters being joined by Alan Palmer, from HEFCE, engaging in a discussion and responding to questions and comments from the floor. A key issue was HEFCE's rationale for the proposed changes, particularly in light of the positive impact of the TQEF. In response, Heather Fry encouraged delegates to think carefully about the relationships between the currently designated areas of learning development, retention, widening participation, volunteering

and teaching enhancement, and to explore new alliances which might prove to be more effective in enhancing the student experience. She stressed that the new approach to funding demonstrated a more strategic approach to the overall enhancement of learning and teaching, acknowledging, for example, that improved retention is often achieved through enhancing the student experience for all.

The afternoon provided delegates with the opportunity to share relevant case studies and join discussions with a number of additional presenters. Mark Stone, Director of the Higher Education Learning Partnerships CETL at the University of Plymouth, Sian Waring, Dean of Learning and Teaching at the University of the Arts London and Caroline Stainton, Director of Learning and Teaching at the University of Northampton shared their experiences and perspectives of the impact of the funding proposals within their institutions.

The day gave rise to a number of key issues which were communicated to HEFCE in a joint report from the conference organisers.

A Summary of Responses from the Conference 4th December 2008 to HEFCE

Funding of retention activity

There was a general lack of clarity about the future funding of retention and WP initiatives. Would funding for retention be abandoned in favour of WP initiatives focused on schools and colleges? It may be the case that the definition of WP needs to be broadened to include support for all non-traditional students rather than just work targeted at schools and colleges. Indeed, more generally a new era of funding and activities might require a new terminology altogether.

Unintended consequences

There is potential for unhelpful competition between overlapping groupings within HE institutions (e.g. constituted as learning or educational development, learning support, WP *etc.*) which could have a destructive

impact on fragile activities which have taken a long time to establish and gain credibility. Delegates acknowledged that HEFCE intend to allow institutions to choose their own approach – but greater clarity about the purposes of funding would be helpful to avoid this potential for conflict.

The relationship between activities

Institutions currently operate a number of discrete strands of activity including learning development, WP, learning and teaching enhancement, educational development, volunteering and staff development. This division can engender tension, competing agendas and 'power struggles'. Delegates felt that the framing of the consultation itself had reinforced these divisions (particularly between volunteering, community engagement, access and retention).

Institutions will now need to create coherent, encompassing strategies, with targets and processes for achieving them. HEFCE should encourage joined-up thinking by explicitly articulating the relationship between student learning experiences and teaching enhancement, and by acknowledging that volunteering is rapidly becoming embedded in institutional learning and teaching culture.

Reporting and monitoring

Some institutions place a high value on activities which are part of HEFCE's reporting requirements; any move away implies a loss of status, unwelcome room for interpretation and possible undermining of the activity. Accountability within institutions needs to be addressed through working collaboratively and strategically. It may be timely to link the proposals for new ways of working with a suggestion that internal monitoring is an expectation. Alternatively, a lighter touch approach may be for HEFCE to present institutions with a set of key questions.

HE in FE

With regard to HE in FE and schools liaison there were a number of issues:

- There are scale issues for building and delivering student support

for the HE in FE student as the numbers grow in any one location e.g. Truro College is growing from six to 600 HE students in ten years
- Ongoing funding and investment for HE in FE link staff is necessary to assist with curriculum design and student progression. This has been driven in the past by Quality Assessment concerns. But HE in FE staff need support through connections with colleagues in partnership network communities of practice and for scholarly activity. This role and the attendant advocacy is considered vital to support WP, retention and progression
- HE in FE staff development needs to be supported as a 'two way street' e.g. College-based staff guiding HEI staff in work-based learning
- While considering the development of WP and funds, we should not forget that there are some areas of work in HEIs and FECs that should stop and the money be redeployed. HEFCE's annual monitoring cycle could ask institutions for details of what superfluous activities they have stopped doing!
- As the shift of funding from TQEF occurs there is a concern that the WP Strategic Assessment reporting will ask for details of outreach activity but will not be explicit about the ways in which this is focused on targeted NS-SEC or other under-represented groups. There is a danger that funds could be subverted into general schools liaison and recruitment, as senior management focus on student numbers and the calibre of students.

Outcomes of the consultation

The HEFCE Board considered the recommendations arising from the broader August 2008 consultation on the proposed funding. The full paper can be found at http://tinyurl.com/cyatt9. The Board agreed to proceed with the new targeted allocation for teaching enhancement and student success, and to increase the funding for widening access through combining the funding for improving retention, for learning, teaching and assessment strategies, and for teaching informed

and enriched by research into a new targeted allocation to support teaching enhancement and student success.

The proposals will allow institutions to determine how best to use the funding to support continuing and new priorities for teaching enhancement and student success.

It may well be that the conference 'voice' resonated with other respondents' comments since many of the messages taken to HEFCE from the conference were addressed in the report. While the conference provided a direct line of communication for delegates many also reported that it provided an insight into areas of activity that they are aligned to in flow diagrams, organisational structures and operational models, but with which they have no day-to-day association or working relationship. In all, the conference provided the opportunity to share a common problem, share approaches and concerns and to identify a potential way forward through collaboration and joint working.

ALDinHE is the membership association for Learning Development professionals. It was launched at the 2007 Learning Development in Higher Education Network (LDHEN) Symposium. For further information see http://www.aldinhe.ac.uk

SEDA is keen to work with other groups and organisations to promote forums for the consideration of and sharing of practice around topics of concern or interest. Please contact the SEDA Office or the Co-Chairs if you are interested in organising such an event.

SEDA and the 'Students and Universities' Report

James Wisdom, SEDA

The report of the Select Committee enquiry into Students and Universities was published on the Parliament web site on 1st August 2009. This short note picks up on SEDA's evidence, but it is no substitute for reading it from cover to cover. It hits its targets hard. For example, responding to the VCs' claim that standards must be excellent because international students want to study in the UK, it says:

> *'It is absurd and disreputable to justify academic standards with a market mechanism.'*

The Committee have accepted much of SEDA's submission. It is very strong on the need for all staff to receive pedagogic training, for staff to be encouraged to take qualifications, for universities to have clear teaching promotion processes, for pedagogic research to be able to figure in the Research Assessment, and for the QAA to review institutional performance in support of good teaching. They were not convinced by the claim that research excellence must of itself lead to teaching excellence and asked for more research to be done in this area. They did not take up SEDA's encouragement for all managers of the educational process to be trained and qualified to Standard 2 of the Professional Standards Framework.

The Committee want reform of the external examiner system, including training for all (this was part of the SEDA submission). They are concerned about the position of postgraduates who teach (and here the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has moved in advance to commission a further enquiry into all aspects of postgraduate study). They demanded a series of improvements in assessment arrangements, and a code of practice on giving students feedback.

Although they expect the HEA to be able to contribute in a number of areas, they are unconvinced of its value and effectiveness and ask for it to be reviewed by the end of the year, along with the operation of accreditation and the PSF. In many places they bemoan the lack of evidence about key features of higher education, and point to the need for further research work.

My interpretation of the bigger picture is this. The Committee has been exasperated by what it saw as the complacency (and, as it turned out, the inadequacy) of the powerful group of vice-chancellors who represent a traditional but narrow model of selective higher education, wealthy from research and the current model of funding teaching, prestigious in the eyes of the public, but being rapidly overtaken by a modernising, expanding and more open sector. They were unable to defend their claims of excellence with evidence – in fact, what data there was suggested the claims were weak – but were swift to claim autonomy. As Professor Pillay at Liverpool Hope said in evidence, claims for autonomy must be matched by the recognition of responsibility. The Committee found two of the companies they own (the QAA and the HEA) had not pushed hard enough to challenge, question and reform, so they recommended that the first be taken out of their hands and be reconstituted under Royal Charter and the second be reviewed again and reformed with more student involvement. The Committee was clear that from the standpoint of either the student or the taxpayer, things needed to improve quickly. A detailed reading of the report, and of some of the evidence, sets out a daunting agenda for staff and educational development in the next decade.

James Wisdom is a freelance higher education consultant specialising in educational development. He was Vice-Chair of SEDA during the enquiry and gave evidence on SEDA's behalf.

Key Principles for Developing Graduates for the 21st Century: lessons from a decade of practice and development in Business Education

Bill Johnston and **Aileen Watson,** University of Strathclyde

Introduction

Developing students for employment is a key issue for universities, as the State and employers have exerted pressure on institutions to demonstrate the economic relevance of undergraduate degrees, particularly in terms of outcomes involving 'key skills' and 'employability' (Dearing, 1997; Hawkridge, 2005). The recession has led to renewed emphasis on the importance of such outcomes to students (Henly, 2009). This article outlines the educational and organisational approach taken by one UK Business School over the last decade and derives some guiding principles from that experience.

We represent our response to 'key skills' and 'employability' as a major exercise in curriculum renewal. Our strategy has been to go beyond the basics of adding in 'skills' to the curriculum, and we have proceeded by developing a critique of the post-Dearing skills/employability agenda to guide practical course development. We have done this by relating our curriculum development project to the wider literature of education and human resource management, whilst at the same time innovating the components of the course design (Johnston and Watson, 2004; 2006). In addition, we have forged effective relations with the graduate labour markets to engage staff from leading business organisations with students on the course.

Our approach has been to develop a pedagogically-informed business education, going beyond the confines of the traditional disciplinary and 'functional silo' organisation of business degree programmes. To that end we have blended educational and organisational development of the undergraduate business degree. We are working on a scale which encompasses all students on the degree and engages them in compulsory classes designed to achieve progressive development over three of the four years of the degree.

Business Education at Strathclyde University Business School (SBS)

The overall commitment in all programmes is to the application of business disciplines to real business issues, and to develop effective graduates. For undergraduates this has been delivered through the BA programme, *via* a blend of disciplinary specialisms, electives and, since 1999, by the introduction of a sequence of compulsory classes – the Management Development Programme – which provides the material for this article.

The Management Development Programme (MDP)

The MDP is a three-year programme of three credit-bearing classes for all business students (approx. 500 students each year). The programme acknowledges that effective management is embedded in the thoughts, relationships and experiences of people involved in business and other organisational contexts, so therefore embraces: confidence-building; personal effectiveness; management skills, leadership and negotiation; social, ethical and sustainability issues in business; professional values and project management. Although the headline features of the Dearing discourse of team-working, communication, IT skills *etc.* figure in the course design, it is more complex than simply implementing a list of 'key skills' or 'graduate attributes' through course documentation. It entails serious efforts to change student self-awareness and capacity to manage their careers.

The MDP has operated as a successful focus for innovation and quality enhancement in the Faculty. In addition to providing a coherent education for the Dearing discourse, we pioneered the introduction of laptops in 2000 as the major student IT tool, and developed custom designed teaching spaces as early features of the course design. More recently MDP has provided a prime location for work on the First Year Experience and other Scottish QAA enhancement themes.

MDP – student view

Student feedback has been very positive:

> *'The MDP has been invaluable in enhancing my overall employability...I have learned how to work as part of a team, developed the courage to lead and improve my confidence. It is these skills that employers are looking for from graduates.'*
> (BA (Hons) HRM and Marketing, 2008 Ernst and Young, Technology Security and Risk Services)

Four key principles for curriculum renewal

We derived these four principles from a reflexive process involving reflection, discussion and evaluation of the programme, presenting our ideas

and experiences to conferences, and writing up the experience for publication.

We saw this process as good practice, adding a powerful, in-depth element of staff and educational development to the process of course design and teaching.

The four principles are:
- Organisational Commitment
- Teaching Team with Shared Pedagogy
- Active Learning Design
- Employer Partnerships.

They combine educational and organisational development and are both theoretical and practical. We explain them here to offer a strategic approach to curriculum renewal which can be used in other situations.

1. Organisational Commitment
- Environmental Scan
- Strategic direction
- Curriculum structure
- Compulsory for students.

The Faculty scanned the business, political and educational environment and concluded that the undergraduate curriculum needed renewal to add value in terms of student personal and professional development. We took the strategic decision that this would be most effective as a Faculty-wide initiative. This required a revision and re-organisation of the business education curriculum represented by the BA. All students would take the new courses as a mark of their importance as a core component of modern business education. We wanted to develop the confident sense of self and associated characteristics, often regarded as part of the 'social capital' of individuals, and this supported our aim of equality of opportunity for all students. At the broadest level, SBS in the late 1990s took anticipatory action to meet the challenges faced by graduates in the 21st century, and backed its decision by major curriculum renewal sustained over time.

We feel that the four major strategic elements listed above provided the essential basis for sustainable development of innovation in pedagogy, to add value to student learning.

2. Teaching Team with shared pedagogy
- Academic manager
- Year co-ordinators
- Educational developer
- Multi-disciplinary composition
- Reflexive development practice
- Thematic away-days.

Having an academic manager with an overall co-ordination and leadership role is essential. In MDP the manager works through the three year co-ordinators to ensure consistency, coherence and progression. An educational developer from the University's Centre for Academic Practice and Learning Enhancement acts a member of the teaching team and contributes ideas/practice from the wider educational field. The teaching team is multi-disciplinary and combines lecturers with graduate teaching assistants. Responsibility for development of the curriculum and teaching practice is achieved through a process of regular reflective discussion, which leads to short-term modifications and periodically to large-scale innovation. Away-days devoted to themes, e.g. employability, reflection, and feedback, include everybody and engage colleagues with the reality of educational development as a mode of enhancing teaching and learning.

We have characterised our approach as a form of 'reflexive practice' involving, as far as possible, all the major stakeholders and sources of insight. Our approach includes:

- Interaction with literature, and publication of case studies
- Teaching team discussion/away-days
- Systematic pedagogical review and development by the course manager/educational developer

- Use of student feedback from substantial qualitative investigation as well as feedback questionnaires.

Equally, the writing-up of our experiences for publication adds a dimension of academic rigour and criticality. We have found that over time the effort devoted to conference presentations and writing for publication has accelerated our thinking and helped us to produce material which can be used to brief teaching colleagues, thereby spurring debate on the identity of the programme, building team spirit and encouraging informed decisions about teaching practice.

Each year of study has its own teaching team, comprising academic staff and graduate tutors who meet regularly to discuss practical matters, respond to problems and review the programme in the light of staff/student experience. All three teams meet at least twice a year for a half-day session, which combines reports of current development in each year, and also discusses themes, such as employability and reflection, as key learning objectives which should be aligned to teaching and assessment. Course development is reflexive in that it is based on regular review of experience, themed discussion, combined with systematic use of evaluation data (student questionnaires, focus groups) and an emphasis on building a theoretically informed pedagogy.

We feel that this collegiate approach overcomes any tendency to fragmentation in a large programme, engages more staff and provides a coherent organisation of staff time. This also ensures that the programme has identity within the Faculty and allows issues of policy and strategy to be managed collectively and collaboratively. With hindsight, it is difficult to see how so much could have been achieved without this active pursuit of collegiality. A key aspect, however, has been the ability to maintain a core team – the manager, educational developer and year co-ordinators – to provide impetus and continuity of development over time.

3. Active learning design

- Student team collaboration
- Projects
- Reflection and feedback
- Self regulation
- 'Skills'
- Dedicated VLE.

Constructivism challenges the idea that teachers simply transmit knowledge to students by asserting that learners have to actively construct knowledge for themselves. Courses designed from constructivist principles typically employ problem-based assignments, collaborative activity and varied forms of student engagement, assessment and feedback. Examples of all of these forms are present in the MDP design for teaching and assessment.

The basic units of activity are the student teams. These are constituted by selecting students to provide an interdisciplinary mix of principal business subjects, and assessment is driven by engaging teams with real business situations and issues, which become progressively more complex and demanding. For example, by the end of their first year all students will have completed a team project to create and present a business plan for an opportunity of their own choosing. The presentation audiences include staff from major companies like Deloitte, which provides a prize for the best teams.

Over subsequent years the scale and complexity of the management challenge has increased. The current Year Two is designed around a storyline based on the preparation for the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. This provides a rich base to develop student ability to create ideas, lead teams, take business decisions and role-play negotiations between key stakeholders. By Year Three the team formations become more fluid and more directly under student self-management. Equally the complexity of business situations and decisions is enriched by systematic attention to ethical and social issues as they impact business models, organisational practice and environmental positioning.

4. Employer partnerships

- Hard work/requires dedicated staff time
- Involvement in giving feedback to students
- Practical exercises
- Reinforcement of value and relevance.

To enhance student understanding of contemporary terms like employability we have developed working relationships with employers. New graduates participate in group activities with all years, giving examples of organisational practices and skills which they have used in their work roles. Many of these are central to those being developed in MDP. Additionally, typical short assessment centre exercises have been provided by major graduate recruiters, e.g. Accenture, to introduce students to competency frameworks used in recruitment and performance management. Deloitte, Ernst Young and Procter and Gamble have sponsored prizes for teamwork projects in each year. Students are required to present to senior staff and feedback has been excellent.

SBS alumni who are working for these organisations, and who have experienced MDP as part of their undergraduate study, now regularly contribute to the programme. Their recent experience of successful recruitment and early career realities adds a powerful dimension, as does their genuine encouragement of personal and ethical development as key career issues. These interventions provide powerful models of the value to students of developing self-awareness, agency and identity holistically, and not just settling for a basic 'skill set' of employability attributes.

Conclusion: partnership, embedding and evolution

If these four principles might be characterised as a 'product' of educational development, what might constitute the process? Looking back over the decade of systematic work, we have tried to draw out some key features of the practice of educational development.

MDP may be viewed as an example of sustained, in-depth partnership working on the curriculum. Both authors engaged in educational development and the synergies of educational and HRM research provided a robust environment for success and strategic thinking. Strong leadership of the programme has been important. The nature of the positive working relationship has lent itself to mutual support in meeting institutional objectives, external accreditations (AACSB, EQUIS) and in supporting and developing staff.

It became apparent that the scale, novelty and impact of the new course required an embedded mode of educational developer involvement. This contrasts to other developmental modes commonly used by educational development departments in higher education such as: workshop provision; advice and information; advocacy and policy influence; teaching PGCert courses for academic staff/GTAs *etc.*

Central to this 'embedded' mode is a rejection of short-termism and a commitment to in-depth involvement over all phases of course development. It requires the building of trust, by such actions as the developer attending all the relevant planning meetings, and taking the role of honest broker amongst a group of academic colleagues from different disciplines and departments.

This role continued into the early implementation phase of the class design, including a direct teaching commitment and further developmental work with the staff. After perhaps four years, as the design evolved, the developer's role changed in emphasis, with input more focused on fine-tuning in collaboration with the manager and year co-ordinators.

In retrospect, we believe that what we did was to challenge/avoid the institutionalised role conflict between 'outsiders' and 'insiders' which can polarise relationships between developers, course leaders/managers, and other academic colleagues.

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Designing and Implementing Student Support: satisfying a new client group

Ruth Lawton and **Jenny Eland,** Birmingham City University

Introduction

'Designing and Implementing Student Support' (DISS) has been delivered at Birmingham City University for three years. The course was designed and delivered by Jenny Eland from the Educational Staff Development Unit (ESDU) for staff involved with learner support who either could not or did not wish to do the PGCert. This article aims to demonstrate the rationale for educational and staff developers to look outside academic and learner support staff for a new and very appreciative client group and outlines how an existing Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) approved course can be adapted to meet the needs of a new set of clients.

What is included in 'Designing and Implementing Student Support'?

The programme was accredited through SEDA's Professional Development Framework (PDF) in the category of Supporting Learning and is underpinned by the SEDA-PDF value base.

It was designed for those whose work involves providing guidance and support in assisting students to meet their development needs and promoting learner responsibility and autonomy. It explored the rationale behind curriculum design; how modules are designed, delivered and assessed, offering the opportunity to explore how practitioner guidance or subject area knowledge may be delivered within the curriculum. It also offered participants the opportunity to consider the skills needed to be effective in the role and methods of facilitating and supporting learning. There is a strong emphasis on self-reflection and evaluation and there are opportunities for participants to explore their own learning styles and to recognise their influences on practice. The programme also included the importance of how to give

and make use of constructive feedback, how to work with academic and other staff, how to plan for individual and group sessions and how to use and develop resources.

DISS was delivered as a series of five full-day workshops run off-campus, spread over a semester. The assessment asked participants to produce a working portfolio that contained both reflection and evaluation of their practice and acted as a toolkit, providing practical ideas, activities and resources that would enhance their own personal and professional development and enhance the staff/student experience. The portfolios were assessed on a pass or refer basis.

Why adapt it?

In 2006 the Head of Careers (HoC) and the Tutor for Staff Development were having initial discussions about how to enhance the confidence of Careers Service staff in their ability to write for and engage with academic staff. The HoC was about to update a resource the Careers Service had created to assist academic staff to embed employability and PDP in the curriculum (Resources for Academic Staff) and wanted to make sure that both the resource and the workshops that disseminated it used appropriate language. The HoC also wanted more careers staff to engage with the resource and its dissemination.

The HoC was also talking to Senior Library staff about their interactions with academic staff as they too were seeking to more effectively promote Information Literacy and Management in the academic curriculum. The two 'student support' services then combined forces and approached the ESDU asking the Tutor for Staff Development to design and run a course specifically for them. As well as meeting their joint needs it would make the course economically viable and encourage fruitful cross-disciplinary working.

What were the adaptations?

ESDU were very concerned to keep the integrity of the DISS course in order to maintain its SEDA accreditation and enable participants to obtain a recognised qualification and certification. Happily, the 'outcomes' and 'values' of SEDA underpinned the activities and intentions of both careers and library work, so it was less a matter of 'redesigning' and more 'slanting' some of the flexible aspects of the content and self-directed work to better suit the new client group. Previously DISS had been delivered to staff working directly with students, but now many participants would be supporting academic staff to enable them to better support students. As a result the input was tweaked to facilitate the group looking more in depth at how they provided support, particularly in designing aspects of the curriculum; for example, how to embed employability and information literacy. Reflection on one's own and others' learning was focused within this framework and a leap made to how this would impact on student learning strategies. Surprisingly, very little of the content was changed. The assessment was not affected but rather enhanced by the toolkit providing modules/outcomes that could be embedded in any programme.

The outcomes

Almost everyone who participated in that first adapted course in 2007 has submitted and passed and received their SEDA certificate. Better than that are the contacts, resources and opportunities that participants have made as a result of the course:

- At the third workshop one senior faculty librarian was talking about difficulties she was having with an academic course that was part of her caseload. Before the next workshop she met with the course director and generated changes to the induction programme, course content – including delivery of aspects of information literacy herself – and resources accessed by students. Subsequently she also managed to change assessment criteria on the course to include aspects of information literacy.
- A website designed by two librarians for the use of staff and students in one faculty has been recommended to all academic staff across the whole university as part of a redesign of all modules.
- A careers adviser worked with a senior lecturer to develop an adaptation of the TV programme 'Dragons Den' for nursing students; this has led to them winning the Institute of Careers Guidance (ICG) National Careers Award 2008 in the category 'Working with students in post-19 learning'.
- Job titles for some librarians have changed to include 'learning and teaching'.
- The first author of this paper was offered a job in ESDU on the strength of her engagement with academic staff and commitment to working within the curriculum to embed her particular subject specialisms – employability, personal development planning and employer engagement.

Where next?

The restructuring of the university included changes in many central departments as well as faculties so there is a new cohort for the Educational Staff Development Unit to approach in the renamed central services of 'Library and Learning Resources' and 'Advice and Guidance'.

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Learning from Internal Change Academy Processes

Anne Oxley and **Abbi Flint,** Sheffield Hallam University

Introduction

A 2007/8 Research and Development Grant from SEDA under its Supporting and Leading Educational Change programme provided Sheffield Hallam University with the opportunity to undertake an extremely interesting and timely piece of work on learning from Internal Change Academy processes. A presentation to the SEDA Spring Conference 2009 focused on understanding the value of Internal Change Academies as a model for leading educational change and demonstrated how a simple benchmarking exercise may provide a rich source of data in leading change processes. This article focuses on the broader lessons learnt about change rather than on the practicalities and the different models of running an Internal Change Academy. That information is available in the project final report (Flint and Oxley, 2009).

Why this project?

Internal Change Academies (ICAs) or Change Academy methodologies are becoming more popular in universities to build capacity for and understanding of how educational change is led and supported. The starting point for many institutions, Sheffield Hallam included, was participation in the national Change Academy programme jointly run by the Higher Education Academy (HEA)

and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) which began in 2004 (further information, resources and a list of participating institutions is available at the HEA Change Academy web site http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/institutions/change).

> *'Change Academy is a year-long programme of support for teams from higher education institutions that enables them to develop the knowledge, capacity and enthusiasm for achieving complex institutional change. It provides unique opportunities for team-based learning and professional development that focus on the strategic interests and needs of the participating institutions.'*
> (HEA, 2009)

As a result of the attendance of a group of staff at a national Change Academy event held in 2006, coupled with Sheffield Hallam's strong commitment to professional development, the University ran its first ICA (called Shared Futures) in 2007, and is now planning the third iteration of this year-long ICA process (Flint, Oxley and Hynes, 2008). The aim of the current project – to find out why people had decided to run their own programmes and in so doing, what they had learnt about leading educational change processes – was inspired by a Leadership Foundation for Higher Education article (Gentle, 2007) which identified other institutions that had developed their own ICAs.

What this project involved

The focus of the project is how models of educational change within learning, teaching and assessment impact on student and staff learning. The project had three main elements:
Firstly we completed a benchmarking exercise involving face-to-face interviews with the six institutions (other than Sheffield Hallam) in England and Wales which had run ICAs or used Change Academy methodologies. Benchmarking was based on self-evaluation to provide a better understanding of practice and process and generate insights into how improvements and innovations might be made. The questions focused on the strategic approaches and how

specific activities aligned with broader institutional approaches to leading change and educational development. Secondly, Sheffield Hallam organised an event in January 2009 to facilitate sharing and future collaboration between the institutions involved in the benchmarking exercise. We also invited the HEA, the LFHE, and representatives from over 20 institutions who had participated in the national Change Academy or were considering running their own ICA. Finally, we compiled an annotated bibliography (Flint and Oxley, 2009) focusing on contemporary approaches to leading educational change within learning, teaching and assessment, which includes presentations made by the HEA and LFHE at the January event.

So why run an Internal Change Academy?

The benchmarking process suggests that the reasons for engaging with the change academy approach and methodologies are broadly similar for all institutions involved. All had sent teams to the national Change Academy at least once and this positive experience had been instrumental in

the decision to run their own ICA. All staff leading on, or responsible for, their internal academies had attended the HEA programme and interviewees said they felt energised and motivated to adapt the model internally to enable change projects and larger initiatives to move forward.

Experience shows that ICAs are a long term change process, rather than a set of outcomes. Counter to the tendency for staff to focus on the residential aspect of their ICA, it is important to remember that from the outset all the other activities such as pre-meetings, workshops, team leader group meetings and online support environments are a significant part of the process. Professional development is very much at the heart of this whole process. This was often quoted as participants' motivation to engage, combined with the value of some protected time to work on their change projects. The provision of quality venues for the residents and other activities coupled with some in-built social time also fostered a positive sense of reward and of being valued.

The sense of ICAs feeling somehow different was also important in
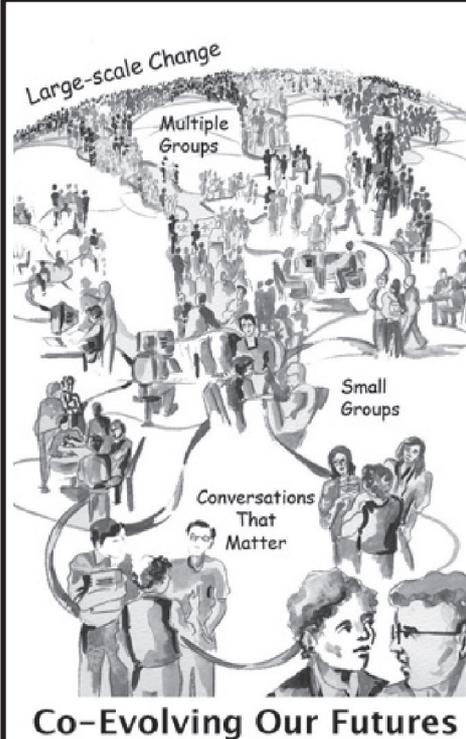
Figure 1. A slide from a digital slide show produced for the Learning from Internal Change Academies event in January 2009 (Nancy Margulies (http://www.nancymargulies.com) and the World Café (http://www.theworldcafe.com))

determining levels of participation. Stories were told of staff leaving their comfort zone in order to join in with activities. Participants readily viewed their work from different, less familiar perspectives and engaged in higher levels of risk-taking than they would normally. We felt this was a really important aspect of ICAs.

Approaches to Leading Educational Change

Most of the institutional representatives interviewed confirmed that using Change Academy methodologies was very much about encouraging enthusiasm for, and enhancing understanding and ownership of, change as a process. A key consideration was to create a cadre of change agents within the different universities to build cross-institutional working relationships and to break down barriers to change.

Unsurprisingly, there were various approaches to leading change in ICAs, which aligned with existing institutional approaches to leading change. However, the common characteristic of the approaches

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used in ICAs (often drawing from the scholarship underpinning the HEA Change Academy) was the focus on collaborative and participatory techniques. Change was typically viewed through the lens of complexity theory and many of the tools and techniques emphasised the role of cross-institutional conversations and collaboration in bringing about real transformational change. For example, many institutions used World Café and Appreciative Inquiry to facilitate new kinds of conversations about change.

This emphasis on cultural change, where all participants are seen as potential change agents, made the ICA activities feel very different to more traditional, mainstream and formally structured approaches to change, where the ability to lead change is often seen as a function of hierarchical management position. A number of institutions remarked that the collaborative and interactive nature of the ICAs marked a departure from change processes led by senior colleagues. A distinct contrast was apparent between the approaches to change within the ICA activities and other institutional change initiatives.

This dissonance in approaches was also reflected within some ICAs, where highly interactive and participatory activities focused on generating dialogue accompanied more traditional project management techniques. Perhaps this reflects in some way the desire to align ICAs with the institutional culture, while still retaining elements of its innovative essence and the influence of different disciplines and theoretical underpinnings.

Alignment between ICA and institutional approach to change was often related to the institutional drivers for change. Drivers were either formal; for example, theming the ICAs around institutional strategies or priorities such as Learning, Teaching and Assessment, e-Learning, the First Year Student Experience; or less formal, for example, just having a desire for change that enabled something new to emerge. In most cases timeliness was key.

Impacts of Internal Change Academies

Our findings suggest that the ICA activities had not only facilitated a shift in participants' perceptions of approaches to change, but in some cases they had also encouraged more critical and explicit discussion of approaches to change across the institution. For example, one institution described the ICA approach as offering a vital opportunity for staff to view institutional change as emergent, messy and unfinished and that the momentum generated had fed forward into re-structuring and overarching change processes. The view that transformational change was within the control of individuals had impact on networks of colleagues and students beyond those directly involved at events and in project teams. In many institutions the cross-institutional nature of the process was unprecedented (particularly in bridging the divide between administrative and support staff and academic staff) and resulted in improved long-term working relationships and a more collaborative approach to other areas of development. None of the approaches to change in the institutions had remained static – there was a real sense that the ICA activities needed to be dynamic and revisited to ensure that the approach remains fresh and appropriate. The challenge for the future of ICAs is to adapt and maintain this innovative approach within a changing institutional culture, and to continue to build upon evidence that this process represents real value in return for institutional investment in providing professional development and support for change across institutions.

Looking to the future

Comments made at the SEDA conference and at our previous event in January indicate a substantial interest in Internal Change Academies and the use of change academy methodologies. For example, one institution is now going to consider using the approach to support culture change, professional development and strategic developments such as their

News from SEDA

Forthcoming events

- **Workshop: Embedding CPD in Higher Education**
  7th October 2009, London

- **Workshop: Personal Tutoring in Higher Education – Where Now and Where Next?**
  26th October 2009, London

- **14th Annual SEDA Conference 2009: Changing Educational Development: New Ideas, New Approaches, New Contexts**
  17th-18th November 2009, Aston Business School Conference Centre, Birmingham
  (REGISTRATION NOW OPEN)

- **SEDA Spring Teaching Learning and Assessment Conference 2010: Communities of Learning**
  Thursday 6th and Friday 7th May 2010, Park Plaza Hotel, Leeds

- **International Consortium for Educational Development Conference**
  28th-30th June 2010, Barcelona, Spain
  Call for proposals coming soon.
  www.iced2010.org

SEDA Website http://www.seda.ac.uk
As many of you will have seen, SEDA recently launched its new website. We would welcome your feedback on the new site and hope that you find it easy and enjoyable to use.

Professional Development Framework (SEDA-PDF)
SEDA is very pleased to welcome both Anglia Ruskin University and Roehampton University to the list of recognised providers of SEDA-PDF.

Latest passes in Leading Educational Change (Professional Qualification Course)

- Barbara Newland, Bournemouth University
- Elaine Fisher, University of Bath
- Karen Fraser, University of Ulster

Latest passes in Supporting Educational Change (Professional Qualification Course)

- Claire Taylor, Bishop Grosseteste College, Lincoln
- Susan Wilkinson, University of Portsmouth

Congratulations to all five!

New Publication

SEDA Paper 124:
Beyond the Peer Observation of Teaching
Edited by David Gosling and Kristine Mason O'Connor

Download an order form from
http://www.seda.ac.uk/publications.htm

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. Another has successfully bid to participate in the national Change Academy with a view to developing their own ICA in the future.

A positive outcome of this project has been the widespread expression of interest by other institutions in being part of a peer network around the use of Internal Change Academies (and the approaches within them). When we spoke to people about what they wanted from this network the overall response was to have some high quality sessions on aspects of working with change, and plenty of opportunity to share practice, ideas and resources. To facilitate this Sheffield Hallam University is developing an Internal Change Academy Network (ICAN). If you would like to be part of this network please e-mail a.l.flint@shu.ac.uk.

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