

# EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

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### SEDA Ltd

Woburn House,  
20 - 24 Tavistock Square  
London WC1H 9HF  
Tel 020 7380 6767  
Fax 020 7387 2655  
Email office@seda.ac.uk

More information about SEDA's activities can be found on our website:

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## Risky business

**Richard Hill**, University of Derby

My new curriculum is very simple. Twelve sessions, each of two hours. No lectures (nobody turns up anymore). No scheduled activities, no tutorial plan. All that exists is a set of learning outcomes and an end of module assignment. You won't find the learning outcomes written in quite the same way as the official documentation. In fact, I've spent a considerable time re-writing them to make them more meaningful, both to the learners and to me. Hopefully, they are better aligned with the assessment task. Are they aligned with the curriculum? They will be if the learners construct the appropriate activities.

So what do I do in the first session? Make it up as I go along? I don't take such a cavalier attitude with my class, but I do spend a bit of time explaining that they will need to learn all sorts of things to stand a chance of completing the assignment. They'll need to learn how to do things, and the best way will be to have focused conversations about relevant tasks. What are the tasks? What do they need to know? What do they know right now?

When faced with this for the first time you can imagine that they are fazed. So a little structured distraction is called for. What is the agenda for today? Perhaps this will create the illusion of real working life, which in the case of these final-year computing undergraduates is not that far away.

*But 'we don't know what we don't know'.*

Can you complete the assessment?

*Of course not, we've only just started the module.*

But why can't you complete the assessment? What can't you do?

*We can't model processes. We need to see some techniques.*

OK. There are a variety of notations for...

There's no doubt that this is a risky approach. The sessions are tiring to facilitate, but they are extremely enjoyable. There is a strong reliance upon the adaptability of the staff – this is not something for the timid. Do you need to be a subject expert? It helps, but the more I teach the more I understand that there should be less emphasis upon subject specialism and more focus on helping students become effective learners. Change management in the IT industry is mostly about communicating with people in challenging circumstances. It's about motivating, cajoling, enthusing and persuading, and you have to do a bit of analysis as well. In fact there are a lot of parallels with academic development as well.

### So let's say you survive week one; what next?

Have they set an agenda? Did you ask them to? One of my classes decided to be revolutionary and reject the University's VLE in favour of Facebook. They did ask first – and they seemed surprised when I reinforced that their learning was my priority, so if they didn't want to use Blackboard, then they didn't have to. I

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imposed the change in delivery on another class and they didn't complain (to start with).

Week two came and there was a semblance of an agenda, and some of the questions suggested that some thinking had occurred during the week. Then one of the students took one of my dry-wipe pens and started drawing on the board, and proceeded to take charge of the next 20 minutes, a leadership scenario if ever there was one. How would I have facilitated this in the past? If I had tried to design an activity I would have probably attempted to create opportunities for leaders to take charge of several groups. This emergent situation permitted the leader to step forward, and perhaps there is only one in this class. Only time will tell.

There were still some 'quiet' students in the class. I prompted them and they responded, but that was the limit of their contributions. Perhaps they were waiting expectantly, as Seel (2010) might suggest.

Week three was more dynamic. More students were displaying some autonomy and initiating conversations to answer questions that would normally have been directed at me. I was adopting the role of arbiter, helping them when they required some experience to influence the argument. The questions were a bit more abstract: 'how would you approach this?', rather than 'is this correct?'

At week four things were starting to happen. I wasn't really needed in the conventional sense; I fielded a couple of questions but they were generally down to task. It was interesting to observe the behaviours of the less enthusiastic members of the class, those who had not attended all of the sessions so far. They expressed concern, not knowing what to do. But then they appeared to fall into line, taking cues from their more autonomous colleagues. The class leader was in his element, speaking confidently and asking questions. He relinquished 'the pen' and supported his class mates, helping them find resolution when discord was evident. Does he recognise his ability?

For week five I decided to do a quick progress check – a simple survey to get a feel for how they were progressing. And here came the surprise – less than half of them responded and the survey indicated that they were not in favour of Facebook. Why? They chose it.

### Learners feeding back

For week six I hijacked the agenda. Item One: explore feedback.

I was willing to let them use the VLE, it made no difference to me as a facilitator. I just wanted to explore the issues surrounding their feelings. By now there was no problem in exploring issues through discussion. Everyone talked freely – this was not possible at the start of the module. The group explored the relative merits of Facebook, and the resistance towards it. Their arguments were articulate, and there was clearly a split in the class. Reason started to emerge and eventually after 20 minutes a consensus formed – prompted by the 'Leader' suggesting that they had argued for long enough and they were potentially missing out on time with me, which seemed ironic since I was increasingly becoming a co-learner rather than the teacher.

And to reinforce this they took charge of the agenda again. Once the feedback item had been dealt with it was 'business as usual'.

### Seeds of success

*'How can we assess the value of our process improvements?'*

In previous years this question appeared to trip up most of the learners in one way or another. Successive attempts to create synthetic situations seemed to have exhausted the possibilities for developing one of the key learning outcomes of the module. However, the change in dynamics of this class had enabled me to establish

my role as a resource to be tapped. The learners posed a crucial question (itself an indicator of their progress), against a backdrop of a context they had arrived at. Normally I would tackle the topic in week eight and show them how to do it. This time they explored the difficulties of process capture and formulated their own question to satisfy a need in week six. The difference this time was that they could apply the answer they received straight away; a major breakthrough. Successive incarnations have established that this was not a fluke.

Week seven onwards demonstrated the momentum that was occurring. What was particularly interesting was the fact that I was no longer teaching the cohort by speaking to them as a class. I was having in-depth conversations with individuals and through conversation this knowledge was emerging elsewhere. The 'Leader' was continuing to develop. He was managing the learning of his peers by posing questions and engaging them in dialogue. My tutorials would never be the same again. If only some of my academic colleagues were as cooperative.

### Reward

So do they learn? I certainly did, and they did too. Our conversation was much deeper than before and it was clear that this approach was allowing roles to emerge. Clearly, previous attempts to teach this were imposing constraints – how many students had not had the freedom to experience

what they were capable of? The teaching environment was restricting them. I would gladly employ a number of these students after completing this one module. They were not demonstrating the autonomy at the beginning; they were ready to accept, to enquire as to what they thought I wanted to hear, to do what they thought I wanted to mark.

Even if the 'Leader' was exceptional, was I not constraining achievement? This question should also resonate with colleagues who are interested in academic development. What opportunities can we create for colleagues? What conversations can we engage in? What risks can we support peers to take?

It's important to take risk. At one level it's invigorating, but it's also inspirational. We can all succumb to the norms of an institution and comply with bureaucracy. The problem is that quality systems can stifle innovation and creativity, making the learning process and its facilitation dull and uninspiring. Let's not think about missed opportunities of the past and look forward to an interesting, risky future ahead instead.

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**Richard Hill** is Subject Head, Computing and Mathematics, in the School of Computing and Mathematics at the University of Derby ([R.Hill@derby.ac.uk](mailto:R.Hill@derby.ac.uk)).

# Developing Pedagogic Research in Scotland: Current and Future Practice

**Dr Lorraine Walsh**, University of Dundee, and **Dr Darren Comber**, University of Aberdeen

## Introduction

Pedagogical development in Scottish higher education owes its progress to a number of factors, including the influence of the Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF) and to projects initiated or funded by Universities Scotland, the Scottish Funding Council and the Higher Education Academy in Scotland. The Quality Enhancement Themes (QETs), as part of the QEF, have turned the spotlight on a range of issues, such as the nexus between Research and Teaching, the First Year Experience and Graduate Attributes. This has resulted in much insightful work on establishing good practice in the underpinning of teaching, for example, through cognate discipline research (see the Research-Teaching Linkages QET <http://tinyurl.com/334l7ef>).

For the Scottish Higher Education Developers' (SHED) group, another important take on this has been the further development of Pedagogical Research (PedR), in particular, reinforcing this activity as both credible and scholarly and supportive of the enhancement of the student learning experience.

Whilst the impact of the QEF, and especially the Enhancement Themes, has been a thought-provoking experience, it has been more challenging for educational developers to work in the Scottish sector without the substantial funding available in other parts of the UK through both the National Teaching Fellowships Scheme (NTFS) and Centres of Excellence in Teaching

and Learning (CETLs). So, it has been an important adjunct to the work of Scottish educational developers to create opportunities to develop and grow the sector's capacity in the increasingly important area of PedR. As a result, 'Developing Pedagogic Research', organised by SHED, supported by the Higher Education Academy in Scotland and hosted by the University of Dundee, was held on the 20 April 2010. This event was the fifth in an occasional series of what have become highly successful days focused on supporting both academic colleagues and educational developers in exploring issues around PedR. Previous events have focused on a range of topics under the umbrella term of PedR. Starting at the University of Strathclyde in 2007, with an



overview of methodologies available to the educational researcher, 2008 saw the University of Stirling host an event focused purely on the research interview as a key method for eliciting data. 2009 saw the University of Aberdeen host an event on the topic of teaching research methods in the social sciences, coinciding with the launch of a new book on the subject (Garner *et al.*, 2009). A second event in 2009, hosted by Edinburgh Napier, saw the launch of HERE-N (Hub for Education Research at Edinburgh Napier).

A wide range of disciplinary-based colleagues, in addition to educational developers, have supported these events through participation as delegates and presenters, drawn from a number of pre- and post-92 HEIs (see Table 1). These institutions also reflect the diversity of the sector in Scotland, with a mixture of small and large, teaching and research-led and specialist and multi-subject organisations. A range of ancillary activities has also developed in recent years to support this growing field, including HERE-N, and a project being undertaken by the Universities Scotland Educational Development Sub-Committee, which aims to compile a database of practitioners and followers of PedR across Scotland.

Centre for Nordic Studies, UHI
Edinburgh College of Art
Edinburgh Napier University
Glasgow Caledonian University
Glasgow School of Art
Heriot-Watt University
Newcastle University
Open University
Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh
Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen
University of Aberdeen
University of Dundee
University of Edinburgh
University of Glasgow
University of St Andrews
University of Stirling
University of Strathclyde
University of West of Scotland

Table 1 Institutions represented at the Developing Pedagogic Research conference held in Dundee on 20 April 2010

### Description of Sessions

The aim for the day was to provide a blend of input from expert practitioners in the field, allowing delegates an opportunity for discussion and direct engagement with some of the concepts and approaches. It also provided a forum in which questions could be aired and addressed, through a mix of new and more experienced colleagues in the field of PedR. The programme included a mix of keynotes and workshops reflecting a wide range of current topics of relevance to the Scottish (and wider) higher education sectors – the keynotes from educational developer ‘heavyweights’ were deliberately chosen to stimulate and enthuse the less-experienced PedR practitioners. These included: Threshold Concepts as a research approach, action research, phenomenography, and teaching educational and pedagogic research. Professor Ray Land from the University of Strathclyde, an educational developer of international reputation, opened the event with a very well received keynote on Threshold Concepts (see Figure 1), which was linked to an afternoon workshop by Jan Smith, University of Strathclyde, lecturer in the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning Enhancement (CAPLE) and an associate editor of the *International Journal of Academic Development*, which provided delegates with an opportunity to explore in more detail the idea of Threshold Concepts as a research approach. The afternoon keynote was delivered by Professor Carolin Kreber, University of Edinburgh, a widely published and respected author in the field of teaching and learning, who provided delegates with a highly thoughtful discussion on ‘Empowering the scholarship of learning and teaching: Towards an authentic practice’, providing for a more reflective and challenging interlude on the issues of the scholarship of teaching and learning as a critical dialogue.

Stuart Boon, University of Strathclyde, lecturer in CAPLE and co-author of the recently published SEDA Special, *Creating a Profession – Building Careers in Educational Development*, offered a workshop which took delegates

*‘Within all subject areas there seem to be particular concepts that can be considered as akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. A threshold concept represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress. As a consequence of comprehending a threshold concept there may thus be a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape, or even world view, and the student can move on. Such conceptual gateways tend to be transformative, irreversible and integrative (exposing the previously hidden inter-relatedness of something). They entail a shift in learner subjectivity and an extended use of discourse’ (Land, 2006).*

Figure 1 Threshold Concepts keynote

through a journey of discovery around the use of phenomenography as a PedR approach, including a helpful explanation of the differences between the conceptual tongue-twisters of phenomenography (‘an empirical orientation’ which ‘focuses on capturing others’ experiences of phenomena’ (Boon, 2010)) and phenomenology (‘a philosophical orientation’ which ‘focuses on capturing the essence of phenomena’ (Boon, 2010)). Pete Cannell, Depute Director (Learning, Teaching and Curriculum), Open University in Scotland, led a session which made good use of case studies and provided an opportunity for delegates to begin to plan an action research project. And, finally, Cathy Bovill, University of Glasgow, part of the Enhancement Themes Curriculum Design project team, provided the view from the other side of the relationship in her session on teaching the concepts and approaches of PedR to others, as opposed to practising directly oneself as a researcher. A key feature of the aforementioned QEF is the involvement of students and we contributed to this by involving a student perspective as a further welcome addition to the day. This workshop was offered by Nick Bowskill and Steve Brindley, from the University of Glasgow, whose session

on 'Shared Thinking as Group-Oriented Enquiry Based Learning' discussed the potential for new pedagogical and methodological possibilities for research through supporting students in the collaborative construction of a whole-group view of their collective thinking (see Figure 2).

*'Shared thinking is the process by which students can be supported to collaboratively construct a whole-group view of their collective thinking using a generative discussion protocol supported by network-based classroom technologies. The aim is to create new pedagogical and methodological possibilities for development and research' (Bowskill, 2010).*

Figure 2 Shared Thinking workshop

## Evaluation and Future Planning

What did we learn from the event?

Delegates were asked the following five questions:

- What did you find to be the most valuable aspect of the event? Why?
- What did you find to be the least valuable aspect of the event? Why?
- Rate the following on a scale of 1-5 (administration, venue, catering programme)
- Additional comments
- How did you find out about this event?

The main points of feedback we received included:

- Provide a glossary of terms aimed at participants new to pedagogical research
- Combination of a keynote and workshop on the same topic a useful model
- Need to build in specific and protected time for questions following the keynotes
- Request department/job role details as part of the registration process
- Have a clearer cut-off date to inform those on the waiting list that they have a place – even better, organise a larger event to meet the demand
- Consider introducing a nominal charge for these events in an effort to reduce 'no-shows'
- Future events could aim to include more practitioners in the programme.

## Conclusion

This was a successful, informative and highly enjoyable day for all concerned. Nonetheless, the current economic climate creates a potentially challenging situation for PedR. At the time of writing, the details of spending cuts in the sector have not been finalised but initial cuts of 15% over the next three years, with potentially worse to come, are being anticipated by many. Pressures on academics to justify their research projects through full economic costing

and record their day-to-day activities as part of management-oriented workload models, means that time and support for PedR activities may become increasingly constrained. Funding available within the Scottish HE sector for research into learning and teaching has never been substantive, due to the nature of the funding allocation model from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) which in the main leaves the decisions on specifics to individual HEIs, as opposed to ring-fencing. This is a situation which is only likely to intensify as the actions of all funding bodies, whether it be the SFC, Research Councils or the HE Academy, begin to reflect the financial squeeze.

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**Lorraine Walsh** is an Assistant Director in the Library and Learning Centre, with responsibility for Educational Development, at the University of Dundee ([l.walsh@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:l.walsh@dundee.ac.uk)), and **Darren Comber** is a Senior Educational Development Adviser at the University of Aberdeen ([d.comber@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:d.comber@abdn.ac.uk)).

# What students want: Impact of Browne

Alex Bols, National Union of Students

Browne, the Parliamentary vote on raising the cap, the White Paper...recent months have seen radical and rapid changes to the higher education system, the implications and ramifications of which will only truly be understood in the years to come. In the last issue of *Educational Developments* I highlighted the increased expectations that students have in relation to their feedback on assessment and I wanted to expand on this theme within this wider context.

After the 1998 introduction of full-time undergraduate fees and then their further increase in 2006, in addition to the increased focus on feedback turnaround times, we have seen

year on year increases in the number of students making complaints and appeals and even protests at some universities about the number of contact hours that they receive. This focus of students becoming increasingly critical and demanding of the education that they are now contributing towards has given rise to the dialogue of students as 'consumers'. The reforms of recent months with the £6000 lower cap and £9000 upper cap are likely to increase this focus, not least because for many courses students won't just be contributing to the costs of the course, but funding the cost of teaching entirely. This is likely to give rise to even greater expectations and an increase in the consumer traits that students exhibit.

Aaron Porter, NUS President, has spoken recently of this change: 'If students are to pay hugely increased fees, then they must have increased rights and increased power', going on to say that 'Browne ushers in the era of sticks and not carrots', citing, for example, that 'Institutions must be required to repay fees to students where there is poor quality in delivery or promises not kept'.

This increase in expectations based on rising fees would be noteworthy enough with the impact that it may have on the changing relationship between the student and their institution. But it is also worth reflecting on the additional layer of nuance that real differential fees could impact on this relationship. It is not known yet how much institutions will charge but it is likely that there will be significant differences in the fee levels between different providers of higher education. This will raise questions of what students are actually paying for and whether they are just paying additional fees for enhanced employability and the reputation of an institution or whether there will be real differences in their experiences whilst they are studying.

NUS strongly argues that there should be threshold, and not just minimum, standards of the quality of the student experience at all institutions. We believe that there are certain elements which are core to a high quality student experience which all students should be entitled to expect, but the question remains whether there will be a certain amount of gold-plating of the student experience for those paying more. Will a student paying £9000 get their gold card when they arrive guaranteeing them feedback within a week, monthly meetings with their personal tutor and a free laptop to support their learning? Whereas the student arriving for their £6000 course might be given their discount

card entitling them to feedback within five weeks of their assessment, a termly meeting with their personal tutor and access to the institution's computer labs.

Whilst it is likely that students paying more will have higher expectations, does it necessarily follow that students paying less will have lower expectations? Will some students be offered cheaper fees on the basis of less contact time or fewer books in the library? We would want to ensure that in this increasingly marketised environment students are provided not only with a certain level of quality of experience but also with adequate consumer protection in place to protect their rights.

These questions are undoubtedly uncomfortable, and do not sit well with the partnership approach model of higher education that we still believe should be at the core of higher education. However, as distasteful as some may find this scenario, they are certainly issues that will now need to be worked through as the full implications of recent changes are felt.

This is where it is important to support not only institutional managers but also academics within institutions, who will be having the face-to-face contact with students, to consider these issues. Academics will need to think about what the impact might be of increasing consumerisation, how the changing relationship between students and their institutions might affect their own practice and the way in which they interact with students, and how they might respond to these changing needs.

**Alex Bols** is Head of Education and Quality at the National Union of Students (Alex.Bols@nus.org.uk).

## Digital voices – making stronger connections with the recorded voice

**Andrew Middleton**, Sheffield Hallam University

### Introduction

If I ask you to think of your own student experience, the chances are you will tell me first about the people you learnt with; fellow students, tutors and others who helped you on your way. You will also tell me about your own struggles and successes, remembering the circuitous routes you devised on your way to making sense of the theories and the practical challenges you faced, and the need to organise yourself. It is likely you will reflect on an uneven experience: times of intense collaboration; topics which

left you cold; and times when you were driven and inspired.

Connection with other people is the common factor behind all of these aspects of a student's experience of learning; personal connectivity that is most evident in the human voice. The voices we depend upon as students are diverse and usually ephemeral: tutors, peers, friends, experts and the authentic voices of professional and public organisations. Then there is our own voice – that busy voice in our head asking questions, constructing

answers and reflecting on the evidence around us. Without these voices, our experience of learning would be poor and perfunctory.

If voice is fundamental to the experience of learning, how can we make more use of it? Six ways of using the recorded voice are introduced below.

### Six ways of using the recorded voice to enhance learning

The following approaches are indicative of what academics and



students in the UK are doing with digital media to extend their existing physical and virtual learning environments.

### **Making notes**

Over 50 volunteers responded to an invitation that called for students who were interested in using MP3 recorders to help them learn. During induction to the project at which the volunteers were given an MP3 recorder, the students declared, almost without exception, that they intended to use their device to record their lectures. Many of the participants explained they were not good at making notes and that they found doing so distracting. It was suggested by the project leaders that the recorders could be used in other situations too and when the students were later surveyed they explained how they had put the recorders to good use, capturing, amongst many other things, groupwork decisions, procedural notes in labs, formal and informal feedback, role plays, placement meetings, and personal ideas (Middleton and Nortcliffe, 2009). Rothwell (2008) reports on another alternative to lengthy lecture recordings, describing how making audio summaries of lectures can have many benefits – benefits that are multiplied when students take responsibility for building a collective audio summary revision bank.

### **Setting and supporting assignments**

Setting assignments is an art. Often key to getting this right is an effective briefing document that clearly describes what needs to be done and why. Such documents need to be concise and clear, leaving no room for misinterpretation. Inevitably, the briefing document will be reinforced in class and in one-to-one discussions; situations in which detail and unforeseen issues can be addressed. All of this can entail a lot of explanation and repetition and can result in inconsistency. By recording class briefings and FAQ-type conversations, and making them available to all through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), the academic can be sure that all students receive the same information, that key points are emphasised, and

that the meaning and purpose of the assignment is unambiguous. Whilst the written document sets out the essential information about the assignment, the audio briefing can be more useful to emphasise important points and the assignment's rationale, and to pick up on students' initial questions and anxieties. The recording can be used to engage the students in different ways and to motivate them – even those students who may have missed a critical briefing session.

Sutton-Brady *et al.* (2009), noting the flexibility that the technology affords, discuss the production of podcast episodes in setting and supporting assignments. In their short-format recordings they describe how the assessment task, guidelines for undertaking the task, and feedback on the task can all be delivered using a common podcast channel.

### **Project-based learning**

Lee *et al.* (2007), and others, describe how podcast assignments create a useful and recognisable framework for project-based learning. Podcast assignments can take many forms, but are often set as groupwork, with students assigning themselves a range of roles as they plan and execute a ten-minute 'radio documentary' type production. Students enjoy the variety of the approach which allows them to use primary sources, select valuable evidence, create a narrative, discuss findings and even add music and effects to make their programme more engaging for themselves and their peer audience.

### **Poster assignments**

Poster assignments are popular in some disciplines because they require individuals to undertake research into a self-defined topic, reporting back on their study using a format that is usefully constrained and simply structured. Students may be expected to talk to their poster in front of tutors, peers and visitors, and this requires them to be confident and articulate. However, the poster technique is also prone to difficulties – some students will cover their posters in dense text and data that will never be read by

their audience and the presentations are usually ephemeral, 'heat of the moment' affairs. They can induce anxiety, leaving the student with little recollection of their performance or what was discussed by those who viewed the work. A 'digital poster' technique requires the same degree of research, but the presentation method is different. Each student produces a single PowerPoint slide containing a heading, attribution and up to about five images. Each image represents a key aspect of the research and so creates a visual structure for a five-minute presentation. The presentation is given by the student to the computer and this is recorded using a microphone and screen-capture software such as *Camtasia Studio*. The presentations are then shared in the VLE as videos where tutors and peers can learn about and feed back on the study. The learner is also able to reflect on their own work and compare it to that of their peers.

### **External speakers**

'Experts' are readily available to us now that we have MP3 recorders, voice memo tools on our mobile phones, Flip video cameras, and Skype internet telephony. Employers, colleagues at other universities across the globe, practitioners in the private and public sectors, service users, broadcasters, and members of the public, can now be invited to speak to our students because they can be interviewed and recorded at times and in places that are convenient to them. Because the recorded voice is asynchronous, the interviews can be used anywhere, anytime: across cohorts, universities, and into the future, being played and replayed so that nuances are able to emerge as meaning grows. The use of external voices means that our campuses need no longer be isolated from the world into which our students will graduate.

### **Feedback**

Audio feedback, of all of the ideas discussed here, is a technique that immediately resonates with many academics who appreciate the need to find effective ways of producing meaningful, engaging and effective feedback quickly (Rotheram, 2007;

2009). As with other techniques, a strong sense of connection through the use of the asynchronous digital voice is at its heart. It has also attracted interest because digital technology makes it easy for anyone to produce it, using MP3 recorders, smartphone voice memo tools, Flip video cameras, web cams, screencasting software, or desktop audio and video software – just press the red button in your software or on your device to record, and press it again to stop recording. And it is easy because audio in the academic world addresses a specific and familiar audience, circumventing the need for polished, broadcast-quality material and the associated requirement for editing and production. Media-enhanced feedback of this kind is useful because it is different and so complements or provides an alternative to other feedback methods. Nevertheless, the principles of effective feedback remain, with audio giving staff a new way to make direct and personal appeals to their students – interventions that can be informative, orienting, motivational and caring.

### Personalisation

What should audio feedback, and the other digital media techniques discussed here, look like, sound like, or feel like?

Digital media is highly adaptable. Variables such as style, timeliness, duration, detail level, integration, intended audience response, alignment with outcomes, and so forth, affect what each producer will do (Middleton and Nortcliffe, 2010). In suggesting academics can do more with digital media to enhance learner engagement at staff development or special interest group events, the author has frequently turned to examples produced by others that demonstrate the technology's usability and versatility – and the academic's creativity. It is the personal nature of such materials that is apparent and it is clear that academics are now able to enjoy using the digital media in ways that suit their particular contexts – stylistically and pedagogically.

Personalisation is important for students too. One of audio feedback's

key attributes, for example, is its adeptness at conveying meaning; something that Brown (2001) says is critical to effective feedback. As a digital and linear medium, educational audio production need only take as long as it takes to say what needs to be said. This means the producer can focus on what is important without being distracted by the technology. It also means that many of the techniques described here are immediate – and this has a bearing on their impact.

### Conclusion

The emphasis here has been on the asynchronous digital voice, not audio *per se*. It is the personal connectivity that is most important and this can be found in media other than digital audio. Over the last decade affordable MP3 recorders and free audio software have become available and developers, learning technologists and academics have experimented with these technologies. Those early experiments have now turned into reliable, embedded pedagogy that directly address the need for variety and meaningful learner engagement. This can be seen most clearly in the area of feedback provision, but the Digital Age of user-generated content is ready to see academics and their students making stronger connections using the digital voice in new ways beyond the current constraints of their familiar physical and virtual spaces.

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**Andrew Middleton** is a Senior Lecturer in Creative Development at Sheffield Hallam University ([a.j.middleton@shu.ac.uk](mailto:a.j.middleton@shu.ac.uk)).

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# Refreshing PGCerts for Changing Times

**Fran Beaton**, University of Kent

This lively event took place at Woburn House on 9 November 2010. It was booked to capacity – 35 delegates plus four presenters – and considered different aspects of the challenges and opportunities for PGCert course leaders and tutors.

James Wisdom set the scene for the day, inviting us to consider the likely changes to six aspects of the Higher Education sector over the next five years: the nature of qualifications, methods of delivery, processes of learning, students, the academic culture, and lecturers and teaching. This naturally generated a lot of discussion as we considered the implications of each of these for our work, not least the shift in student expectations about who teaches them, how often, what, where and how and to what end. We began to explore the broader questions about different stakeholders' perceptions of the nature and purpose of HE, as conceived by governments, employers, students and the need for PGCerts to become much more responsive to all these changes. Gail Langley (London South Bank University) focused on the multi-faceted nature of internal and external agenda and the challenges these could pose for a course team engaging in change management. She considered in particular the different drivers – for example, a head of department may be looking for a PGCert

to deliver a quick fix, whereas the course team's focus was on developing reflective practitioners and exposing them to a richer variety of materials and activities. We discussed – not for the first time – the importance of balancing these agenda while maintaining the academic integrity of what we do. Sean Walton and Will Stewart (University of Bradford) described their experiences of revamping a PGCert module to meet the needs of two new groups of teachers: a changed face-to-face version for Graduate Teaching Assistants and an online version for collaborative partners outside the UK. They focused particularly on the importance of the context in which both groups worked and the course team's awareness that both the material itself and the ways in which they were expected to engage with it could be culturally and academically unfamiliar. The day concluded with a Q&A panel which drew together many of the themes of the day, which had passed all too quickly. A big thank you, both to all our speakers for giving their time and expertise to this and to all delegates for such a stimulating day. We hope to run another event in this series in the course of this year.

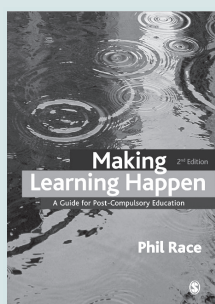
**Fran Beaton** is a Senior Lecturer in HE and the Academic Practice/PGCHE Programme Director at the University of Kent (F.M.Beaton@kent.ac.uk).

## Book Review

### Making Learning Happen

by Phil Race

Second edition, 2010, London: Sage



In this new 2010 edition of what has become a classic PGCert text, Phil Race stays very close to his quoted Einstein mantra: 'everything should be made as simple as possible, but not too simple.'

This is a very accessible book, full of practical ideas, charts, diagrams, activities and suggestions for solutions to real classroom issues in the post-compulsory sector. Rather than starting from a theoretical model into which all learning and teaching activity is then made to conform, Race returns

to the seven factors which he believes underpin effective learning for all. This book is consistently focused on the tone set by the title – 'making learning happen' – developing teaching strategies to promote active learning.

There is a real recognition of the importance of context, emphasising that there are very few absolutes in the real world of learning and teaching, but many conditionals. The ways in which an individual or a team might approach their own situation are encouraged by practical frameworks.

The new chapter on 'Designing the curriculum for learning' is particularly useful for the initial planning stages of reconfiguring curriculum for new 'audiences', or for new situations or for new credit frameworks. While using Race's familiar 'ripples on a pond' thinking and combining this with Biggs' known principles of constructive alignment, the actual practical steps of implementation will appeal to staff teams who do not embark on

curriculum design as a regular part of their daily activity.

Phrases which take wearily overused concepts and give them a new lift, such as (these aren't typos!) 'learning incomes', or 'I'm sorry, I haven't a cue' or 'feedback for low fliers', emphasise the accessibility of this book.

As someone who has used the last chapter 'What can I do when...' (giving credit to Race!) with new staff, demonstrators, post-grads who teach or experienced staff faced with new student issues, I can vouch for the usability of this book for immediate support in workshops and for longer-term planning of staff development programmes.

I suppose the gap I would like filled is 'learning through research' – but that's probably another book!

**Helen Gale** is an Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching, at the University of Wolverhampton.

# Reflections on the 15th Annual SEDA Conference 2010: 'Developing ourselves: a conference for educational developers, by educational developers'

Charles Buckley, Bangor University

## A new structure for the Conference

In the current climate characterised by uncertainty and straitened times, the theme of the 15th Annual SEDA Conference indicated to me that there would be opportunities to reflect on my role as an educational developer and share ideas with colleagues in similar roles. The Conference Committee introduced a new structure and venue for November 2010. The conference theme allowed for a potentially wide range of contributions which the organisers arranged into the following strands:

- *Professional Development*: with sessions on topics such as mentoring and coaching, introducing variety into academic development practices and information on SEDA Qualifications
- *Curriculum Development*: including student engagement, curriculum flexibility and designing in employability
- *Evaluating Impact and Value for Money*: with contributions on topics such as targets and performance measures and how do educational developers make an impact
- *Leading Educational Change*: this strand included sessions on facilitation, new technologies and managing effective change interventions
- *Educational Developers as Scholars*: these sessions covered key issues such as getting bids, a mini writing retreat and an opportunity to find collaborative partners.

The organisation of sessions into themes such as this provides a useful framework for delegates, although there were some cancellations in Strand 3 and the amalgam of certain sessions seemed a little artificial with colleagues moving between the strands. On the final afternoon, parallel sessions focused on 'big issues', which were Graduate Attributes, Student Voice, Disability-friendly Approaches and Internationalisation. The interactive nature of sessions which characterise a SEDA conference, combined with a rich array of delegates, ensures that dialogue focuses on issues which are very current and pertinent to attendees.

## Venue

The new venue, the Best Western Premier Queen Hotel, is opposite the railway station in Chester, which is very

convenient for those travelling by rail although parking is difficult and it is approximately one mile to walk to the centre of the city. It has undergone major refurbishment and the Hotel website states that: 'Our wacky, ultra-imaginative interiors really set the tone for your stay!' Feedback from colleagues using the hotel was that it was quirky and comfortable with good-sized rooms. There are Italian terrace gardens, with wooden furniture and deep leather executive chairs in some of the conference rooms which distinguish the venue as unique. The facilities for conferences are good with nine designated rooms; the largest, which held the Keynotes, accommodates up to 500 delegates.

## Networking opportunities

During both days of the conference there were specific times set aside for networking which, together with a Drinks Reception and Treasure Hunt, provided ample opportunity for newcomers to get to know more-established SEDA members. In addition, there was a breakfast session for people new to SEDA to find out more about the organisation. The deliberate planning of space for networking is a good idea and seemed to be well received. In addition, some of the sessions within the 'Educational Developers as Scholars' strand were specifically designed to promote cross-fertilisation of common research ideas and sparked some collaboration. Likewise, colleagues attending the mini writing retreat were extremely positive about ideas they had generated and shared in such a short space of time. Instead of exploring Chester with the Treasure Hunt group at the end of Day 1, there was an opportunity for more networking time, taking part in the Reading Group or, as I did, walking the Labyrinth – a hand-painted canvas mirroring the first labyrinth to be built as a teaching and learning resource at the University of Kent in 2008. This '...presents the walker with metaphors of journey and exploration' (Sellars, 2009). I attended most of the sessions and presentations relating to the strand of Educational Developers as Scholars, although I dipped in and out of others. Some of the sessions were designed to provide an opportunity to share ideas with other colleagues who might have similar research ideas, although the group sizes were fairly small in this theme, so there were limited opportunities.

## Keynote speakers

There were two keynote speakers who provided different perspectives on educational development. David Green's session on comparisons between UK educational

development and his experiences in Seattle was engaging despite the failure of the PowerPoint which he had planned. He successfully encouraged attendees to think critically about whether the drive in UK universities to make learning and teaching central to missions has inadvertently undermined the educational development community. In addition, he threw open the challenge that whilst there is obvious value in conferences and events, we would have little impact if we did not ensure that research is translated into peer-reviewed publications to enhance the credibility of the claims we make. As well as this, there was the suggestion that colleagues should spend time with real students and not just with lecturers. This fitted well with the theme of the conference and provided an opportunity to reflect on our positions in the rapidly evolving environment of educational development. The presentation might have given more acknowledgment to the differences within the UK, although, in the time available, this was difficult.

On the final day, Glynis Cousin (2010) spoke in typically thought-provoking style and set several provocations for the audience; these included asking us to consider 'Are we a reproductive discourse community...with a shared interpretive repertoire that determines our vocabulary and what we think is thinkable?' She also asked us to consider whether people are challenging, refreshing, expanding their thinking, practices and pedagogic moralities. The thrust of her argument was that developers need to be more mindful of their own positionality and be open to new ideas and rival

explanations to established views. One way of doing this, she argued, is to move from notions of reflection to positional reflexivity in which we examine our biographies, place and selves. The metacognitive challenges left the audience quite taciturn, but I am sure that the implications will encourage some reflexive dialogue beyond the conference.

### Final thoughts

Glynis Cousin's presentation opened with an adulatory comment about what a marvellous organisation SEDA is. She also stated that, 'It has fostered a collegial, supportive community of developers and its events from workshops to conferences like this are always inclusive and supportive, particularly towards newcomers'. This accurately captures my thoughts as a newcomer to the organisation. The passion and enthusiasm at SEDA conferences are evident and the Committee and Executive make a conscious effort to provide a convivial atmosphere which is open and welcoming.

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**Dr. Charles Buckley** is the Director of the PGCertHE in the Academic Development Unit at Bangor University (c.a.buckley@bangor.ac.uk).

# Educational Development for the 21st Century

**Glynis Cousin**, University of Wolverhampton

*This article is based on extracts from the closing keynote address at the 15th Annual SEDA Conference, Chester, 17 November 2010*

Arguably, SEDA has done more than any other organisation to ensure an educational development presence in UK universities. It has fostered a collegial, supportive community of developers; its events are always inclusive and supportive. It is a warm community and its warmth has been part of SEDA's effectiveness. Is it timely to ask also whether this warmth also functions to nest ourselves in a conservative place? Possible answers to this question are the theme of my discussion.

### SEDA as a discourse community

Arguably, SEDA can be described as a 'discourse community' in that it has a shared repertoire of ideas and values deriving from an agreed canon and from established practices. This is evident, for instance, from our reading lists for postgraduate higher education teaching certificates. And our curriculum provides evidence that our community is normative, expressed through our use of binaries which are suggestive of pedagogic moralities: deep learning good/surface learning bad; learning by doing good/rote learning bad; student-centred good/teacher-centred bad; learning outcomes good/curriculum misalignment bad; portfolios good/

exam papers bad; pedagogic-led technology good/technology-led pedagogy bad. Perhaps more than any other morality, we commit to reflective practice as very good, and 'constructive alignment' as the key to sound curriculum design. Indeed, many PGCerts are big on Biggs (2007) and our promotion of his work supports our ritual bows to the shrine of constructivism. Because reflective practice and constructivism are so central to the education development community, I will focus on these two principles.

### Constructivism

Constructivism is a widely shared epistemological position among educational developers. This position



is explained often through the principle that learners are meaning-makers in need of *experiencing* understanding. Constructivism, then, is invoked to license learning-by-doing or more broadly student-centred activities. But does our adherence to this somewhat reduced principle commit us to what Von Glaserfeld (founder of radical constructivism) called ‘trivial constructivism’? How many of us go deeply into constructivism’s controversial philosophical foundations? Warrick (2010), for instance, suggests that it is a philosophy in vogue rather than a philosophy explored:

*‘Constructivism today has become a “buzz word” – often mistaken by educators as an approach to teaching and learning, rather than a philosophy on how knowledge is created or obtained.’*

Should constructivism have such hegemonic grip on our discourse, particularly if it is insufficiently debated? My associated worry is that the adoption of an ‘-ism’ tends to close down debate. Once we think we have an explanatory framework, we tend to be less open to others. Adherence to ‘-isms’ supports a reproductive discourse rather than an inquiring one. I will elaborate on this issue by suggesting that our own reflective practice as educational developers needs to prompt fresh, rather than reproductive, thinking.

There is an irony in pushing academic colleagues to be reflective practitioners from a community that could be said to work to a settled canon. Sometime ago now, Graham Webb (1997) alerted us to the problems inherent in a developer/developpee opposition: it’s a hierarchy which assigns, argued Webb, expertise to the developer and a subordinate in-need-of-knowing status to the developpee. Out of this opposition has come some otherising of the academic: most notably, if they do not like our ideas and our busy pedagogies, we regard them as ‘resisters’. It is commonplace for all PGCert programmes to have some colleagues with folded arms at the back of the room, hating the pedagogical exercises set, and resenting

the time consumed by them. If we condemn these people as the usual quota of bad apples in the barrel, we ignore an important means by which to consider rival explanations to what we are doing and thinking. In place of an easy judgmentalism, how often does *our* reflective practice lead us to think critically about our positionality with our colleagues? Do we operate with a limited notion of reflection?

### Reflective practice and reflexivity

Schon (1993), the father of reflective practice, was an outstanding, humane thinker and his work on professional practice contains much that is wise and generative. But as with many canonic texts, his ideas have lost some of their potency and subtlety in their hand-me-down form. Reflective practice has acquired something of a reduced meaning, particularly perhaps in the hands of academic colleagues needing to get their portfolios out of the way. Schon’s ‘reflection on action’ is read as precisely that! A reflection on what the practitioner has done. Although Schon meant this reflection to include the question of positionality (namely, what am I bringing to the situation? What is my view of the students? Of myself?), this is not what we get in so many cases. In my experience of portfolio marking and moderating, we often get what I think are dutiful road-to-Damascus narratives – ‘I used to be a bad teacher-centred teacher and now I am a good student-centred teacher’ – which are more rewarded at the marking stage than those assignments which try to come at teaching issues left-field. As Macfarlane and Gourlay (2009) have argued, reflective practice has something of the confessional about it, of Foucault’s notion of self-surveillance. I want to suggest that we can challenge this confessional drift by paying attention to our own reflective practice, which involves moving to the more contemporary one of ‘positional reflexivity’ (Grbich, 2004) and paying attention, *inter alia*, to our textual experience, precisely to interrogate whether we rely on a settled canon.

### Our textual experience

Social scientists encourage us to think of our positionality as gendered,

ethnicised, classed, sexually oriented and able/disabled. These are indeed positional markers but we are also formed by our textual experiences, meant broadly as our absorption of books, music, cinema, exhibitions – any cultural artefact or sound with which we engage and which *forms* us. I am aware of some educational developers who have an impressive range of such textual experience but this is set aside for the privileging of educational development discourse. The two are rarely placed in an examined relationship, despite the enrichment that is likely to come from it. One result may be an overly narrow and assertive educational development discourse which does not grant space to alternative ways of thinking about its presumed wisdoms.

Let me take an example. Many educational developers argue, from a constructivist viewpoint, that lectures are dysfunctional, basing this argument on the view that learning has to involve a more active role than listening. This wisdom seems to me to exemplify our tendency to offer functionalist explanations to our sometimes irritated colleagues.

When we attend a play, concert, talk or opera, *etc.*, do we consider ourselves to be ‘not doing’? Audience response is variable from inattentive to mesmerised or enchanted. My point is that an audience is always doing something, and listening to a lecture rather than, say, cutting up magazine images of marketing with your student cohort, can yield more learning. But there is a further, equally important defence of lectures. Students need to *feel* like students and this often involves a troubled process of *becoming* a student. Arguably, being at a lecture is part of this becoming. In short, lectures do symbolic work in affirming students’ status as students. We can do much to make lectures more exciting, but I would like to see the objections to them as inefficient for learning challenged and for us to think more about the affective and symbolic terrain to learning and teaching. If we stick to functionalist ‘what works’ arguments, we risk the scorn of academics for whom teaching is a many-layered art. I wonder whether

the disengagement we sometimes experience is less about resistance and more about our failure to be interesting.

To accomplish more nuanced understandings of our terrain, I think we need to spread our intellectual wings, to embrace a wider literature, expand our textual experience, draw on what we know from other areas, listen to our academic colleagues, and be open to their ideas. In short, we need to be good at reflexivity ourselves and this involves an expansive, generous orientation on academic colleagues, even those who find us annoying. Perhaps we have the most to learn from those from whom we think we have the least to learn. Perhaps we are sometimes dull

because we are overly nested in our discourse community.

We are indebted to the founding fathers and mothers of educational development and we honour their contributions most by extending them. We need to be open to new ideas and to rival explanations to our established views. Why not bring into our frame novels, films, theoretical alternatives to those in currency and challenges from the margins? This will make us more *interesting* to our colleagues.

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See also:  
Ten principles of constructivism (<http://tinyurl.com/2doqcqz>).

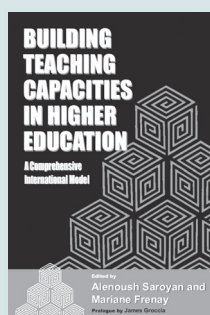
**Glynis Cousin** is Director of the Institute for Learning Enhancement at the University of Wolverhampton (G.Cousin@wlv.ac.uk).

# Book Review

## Building Teaching Capacities in Higher Education

Edited by Alenoush Saroyan and Mariane Freynay

Stylus Publishing, 2010



The origins of the book are described as stemming from an EU and Canadian-funded project which forged strong links among a group of academics around the world. Thence onward the book does not refer to the project but rather to a fruitful endeavour in which the original members of the project have shared local experiences of faculty development – in total at eight institutions in five different European and North American countries. The book claims to provide 'a comprehensive international model' and is divided into two parts – the first being a set of five case studies, the second reports on the development and validation of a conceptual framework.

The five case studies include contributions from Canada, Switzerland, Denmark, Belgium and France, and Part 1 concludes with a comparative review of the material presented. I greatly valued and enjoyed reading about the experiences of colleagues working within different contexts. A conscious decision was made in excluding studies from Australia and the UK – which in some ways is understandable. However, this is achieved at the expense of any significant information about approaches to continuing professional development for established staff or provision

for those who employment status is fractional. Indeed the focus of the studies is upon new full-time staff. Also, if it were possible, it would have been beneficial in regard to the international nature of the publication to hear about the experience of colleagues in countries such as South Africa, Malaysia or Thailand. In the Swiss contribution I welcomed the acknowledgement and recognition of broader quality issues having a significant impact upon our work as developers. Taken all together, the range and diversity of the studies are a useful addition to the available literature associated with staff development.

The second (minor) part of the book is somewhat more problematic and appears to have been grafted on to provide academic gravitas. The central theme is about developing and providing a framework of educational development. The nature of the validation process results in a broad and eclectic model which claims to 'capture the essence of educational development in higher education'. From a scholarly perspective there are some worrying indicators. First, the research studies on educational development units commissioned and published by the Heads of Educational Development Group were missed, and while there are references to SEDA, the 'A' has become transposed into 'Network'. So the reader is informed that SEDA is the Staff and Educational Development Network.

Be clear that even though I have identified some aspects of the publication which are problematic or weak, I still consider that the majority of the book, consisting of the five case studies, provides valuable insights. And as such I recommend it as an informative read.

**Anthony Brand**, Independent Consultant

# Constructive re-alignment? UK educational development from the outside

David A. Green, Seattle University

*This article is based on extracts from the opening keynote address at the 15th Annual SEDA Conference, Chester, 16 November 2010.*

It is fitting that, at a time of great uncertainty in HE on both sides of the Atlantic, this conference invites us to think about how we develop ourselves. While the horizon looks gloomy, I hope to leave you thinking of this as an opportunity for us to realign our work. So let us start with a positive:

*What one aspect of your current role (or most recent role, if you are in transition) gives you most pleasure?*

In other words, if you could only keep one enjoyable aspect of your job, what would that be, and why? Keep your answer in mind for the rest of this address. Now consider the following:

*How did you move into educational development (EdDev) from your previous discipline?*

Use terms relating to *migration* and *travel* to capture this academic journey. (This is a metaphor I've used in the past (Green, 2008), building on Catherine Manathunga's (2006) work on postcolonial approaches to EdDev.) For example, my own academic trajectory sees me at various times as tourist, mercenary, native (in humanities), hostage, undocumented worker (in business), holiday-maker, work-permit holder, asylum-seeker, dual national (in EdDev, thanks to the support of Diana Eastcott at the then UCE), and finally, with my move to Seattle, literally an immigrant. You might want to add terms like refugee, stowaway or naturalised citizen to describe your own path to EdDev.

My guess is that very few people will see a straight trajectory, and that many of our career paths can

be characterised as 'accident and emergency'. As is regularly noted (most recently by Jeanette McDonald, 2010), serendipity figures prominently in the careers of developers. Our circuitous paths should tell us that no matter what is happening in HE, we have been able to change directions (sometimes under duress) and that we have a certain *resilience*. That resilience is a second positive – along with the work that gives us pleasure – to hold onto as we think about UK EdDev in the current climate.

## Liberty and obsolescence: HE and educational development in the USA

Before I can offer some insights into how UK EdDev looks to a newish outsider, I want to preface it with some observations of my initial culture shock in the USA.

While American business principles – the neo-liberal focus on value for money and efficiency – have long been evident in UK higher education, they ironically struggle to gain a foothold in US HE. This absence is most evident in the individual academic freedom afforded to lecturers there. They generally control all module content, assignments, marking, and policies; there is no second marking or external examining, and lecturers are generally trusted as experts who can be left to their own devices. (They are mostly held accountable through end-of-module student evaluations that can be make-or-break at some institutions.) I wonder if that sounds as quaintly old-fashioned (not to mention tempting) to you as it did to me when I arrived? I am calling this view of US higher education 'liberty and obsolescence'.

You see some of the rationale behind that liberty once you look at the overall system and its modularity. Undergraduates must take certain

classes, but mostly do so at their own pace and in any order, so lecturers cannot necessarily bank on shared prior knowledge. Entire departments may struggle to coordinate among themselves because the system is so flexible, unless you have a cohort model or prerequisites.

For educational developers, the implication of that personal freedom is that we do more one-on-one consultation. And instead of structured courses, we run one-off workshops on timely topics – most recently at Seattle University on classroom 'microaggressions' (Sue, 2010) and how lecturers can intervene constructively.

EdDev centres also typically have three defining features: their work is confidential, voluntary and formative. We will never give the names of our consultees to their head of department or to our own managers; we're completely outside the promotion system and never provide 'seals of approval' for people's teaching. If that sounds appealing, can you imagine it working here?

And as is the case in the UK, many centres are looking vulnerable. In some cases, they are being closed or greatly diminished due to finances. So it is certainly not a rosy picture.

## Desire and peril: UK educational development

How does UK educational development look from that perspective? As you will discover, my thinking is full of question marks and contradictions. Salman Rushdie (1991) talks about seeing reality only through shards of a broken mirror, so here is what I see in my own shards right now. At the national level, UK EdDev looks highly *structured*: PGCerts, a national framework (like it or not), a 'no-child-left-behind' approach to educating



educators. And UK EdDev looks extremely *successful*. TQEF, Scotland's Enhancement Themes, the HEA, CETLs – all are evidence that UK developers shifted government thinking and raised the profile of learning and teaching. SEDA's Professional Development Framework (with growing interest from abroad) also puts UK EdDev ahead of other countries in many ways.

At the institutional level, EdDev looks very *strategic*. It has become integral to many institutions, tapping into university leaders' interests and priorities. So I would say developers in the UK are distinctive (in contrast to the USA at least) for the ways in which they've managed to influence and shape local agenda on learning and teaching.

But there is a 'but', and it reminds me of an early 1980s art installation by Jenny Holzer: she projected aphorisms on LED screens and the one that has stuck with me reads, 'PROTECT ME FROM WHAT I WANT'. That quote sums up much of how I am now thinking about UK educational development: the things we desire may simultaneously be perilous for us. Here is why it resonates for me: for all the systems, successes and strategies of UK developers, does the field look any less vulnerable than the small-scale patchwork of US EdDev? It does not seem so, though I am keen for that view to be contested. Perhaps all these strategies and systems have created a hazardous straightjacket: UK EdDev may be so tightly connected to government funding and the whims of university leaders that it is just as susceptible to change as US EdDev.

And maybe at times those institutional strategies do not quite match *our* own unspoken priorities as developers.

In her presidential address at the 2010 ICED conference, Shelda Debowksi pointed out that we often forget to build better links with the second tier of management – deans – to be our advocates in tough times. I would go further to say that the rank and file of lecturers are just as important, if not more so, since a change of VC can prompt a dramatic turnover of deans. Perhaps I am talking with the wrong

subset of UK and US developers, but that degree of regime change appears relatively commonplace.

There is an argument that if we are at the mercy of budget holders, we should simply take the money, fund projects and learn as much as possible from them. Then we will be cut and rebuilt, but can start from a higher knowledge base. I am sympathetic to that view, but believe we are missing a trick when it comes to dissemination. UK EdDev runs a *lot* of events: interactive workshops on valuable topics, explaining findings from projects and local initiatives. Fantastic, provided you have the time and budget. What I do not see as frequently is published research on these projects in peer-reviewed journals. What is the impact of our initiatives if we are not connecting them to previous research, enhancing them through the review process, and laying them out for our peers to extend or refute? Instead we are laying the groundwork, but stopping before we can build the capacity of the field. Publishing could remedy that.

It could also change the nature of the SEDA listserv. As many of you will know, the equivalent list in the USA, the POD list (at <http://listserv.nd.edu/archives/pod.html>), is infuriatingly busy. But it contains frequent research requests and thoughtful responses with full references that help developers ground their work in research. The SEDA list would be ideal for that and this is something we could all help achieve.

### Survival and credibility

I hope you have seen that both US and British EdDev have their vulnerabilities, and that each could learn from the other. So let me be clear: I strongly believe that the grass is always greener where you water it and that is why we started out by thinking about what gives us pleasure in our work. Somehow we have to sustain ourselves despite the negativity in the sector. And we have to survive, whether in our current institutions, or elsewhere.

How do we survive institutionally? Deandra Little (at the University of Virginia) and I have been considering

the idea of seeking *marginality*, rather than centrality, as developers. We are not talking about being *marginalised* by others, but marginality as a location we choose. We are often stuck between competing worldviews (lecturers vs. managers, students vs. lecturers). If we are in this in-between space – with the hybrid worldview of the academic migrant – what would happen if we actively resolve to be on the margins, which bell hooks describes as 'a place of resistance' (bell hooks, 1990, p. 342)? We could choose to support the underdog or the dominant group, or could translate between factions, but on a case-by-case basis, rather than being tied to one specific group. Uncoupled from others' agenda, we might be able to operate with a greater integrity.

How do we survive personally? I am breaking this down into *qualifications* and *activities*. David Baume and Peter Kahn (2004) argue that as developers, we should be exemplary in our work, and I believe our personal survival derives from that. If we need allies right across our institutions, we need to look credible to them – exemplary in ways that they value. The coin of the academic realm is generally still the doctorate. Nancy Chism (2010) has just published a study where 74% of US developers in her survey had doctorates, compared with only 41% of UK developers. That is increasingly problematic for UK EdDev. The requirement for academic credentials is only going to increase and we need to play that game. And if a doctorate is not on the cards for you right now, then how about writing for peer-reviewed publications? A prolific scholar elsewhere in Europe tells me that she is so productive because she has no doctorate but works at a research-intensive university, so she needs to publish for credibility. More of us could follow suit.

And now to activities. Cutbacks mean that we have to make difficult choices about our work: if our metaphorical plate is smaller, we need to prioritise, rather than maintaining everything then feeling increasingly pressured and demoralised. In budget crises, developers are immensely creative in looking for cheaper ways to continue working with half the staffing. The

ingenuity is admirable, but I worry for people's health. So if your centre has to make decisions about what to maintain, what to drop (perhaps temporarily), and maybe which new activities to begin, can you align those activities with your priorities as developers, not only those of *your* managers?

What might be on your new, smaller plate? I would suggest two things that would boost both credibility as a developer and your agility if you need to migrate again within the academy. The first is to have dedicated time for scholarly writing. Obviously some of you do this already, but some do not manage it; I struggled with this at UCE because I would not let go of other activities. Maybe you could do it by getting to work a little later each day and spending just 30 minutes writing at home or in a café. (Boice (1989) found that those who wrote in bursts of at least 15 minutes per day were more productive than binge-writers.) It raises your institution's profile – something that will hopefully please your managers.

And the second part that I consider key is to be teaching *real* students (especially undergraduates). Not teaching lecturers, not one-off guest sessions, but the whole experience from designing the syllabus to marking the final assignments. Without it, we lose touch. Teaching once a year helps us garner credibility for obvious

reasons. We also keep our options open if the time ever comes that we need to return to more 'regular' academic work.

### Constructive re-alignment?

In summary, from my personal, partial view of UK EdDev, I am suggesting that constructively re-aligning our work would include time for (a) research and writing, (b) teaching real students, and (c) the part of your job that gives you most pleasure. And I suggest we consider staking a claim on the margins so we can be constructive without being embroiled in other people's arguments. There will no doubt be many other things on everyone's plates, and this is where our resilience is most tested.

That is how UK educational development looks from the fragments of mirror that I can see right now. My hope is that this talk will have kick-started a discussion, giving each of us opportunity to hold up our own broken mirrors to reflect on how we might be best placed to develop ourselves.

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**David A. Green** is Associate Director in the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and Adjunct Professor, International Studies, at Seattle University ([greend@seattleu.edu](mailto:greend@seattleu.edu)).

# Making the Case for Leadership and Management Development

Steve Barrow and Margaret Crawford, University of Leicester

## Introduction

The reality of the Comprehensive Spending Review is already beginning to bite in many universities. The Business Secretary, Vince Cable, has accepted the broad thrust of the Browne review and the BBC has reported, 'The blueprint for universities in England set out by Lord Browne would see a new emphasis on competition'. The practical implications of these reviews will become clear over the coming weeks but it is clear that universities will be faced with difficult decisions. For example, the University of Leicester, being the most socially inclusive of Britain's top-20 universities, faces

particular challenges in the context of Browne and raising university tuition fees. Finances are undoubtedly being closely examined with a view to 'doing more for less' by increasing the performance of institutions at all levels. Leadership and management are key to securing an increase in performance, and also ensuring that damaging staff-related disputes are resolved quickly and efficiently. But how can continuing (or increasing) funding in leadership and management development activities be justified during difficult times such as these? Investment in 'soft skills' training and development (particularly management development) is

often targeted during difficult times, and funds reduced. On the face of it, this seems to be a logical action because whilst there is often some qualitative and anecdotal information to justify such activities, it is rarely clear how the investment is expected to affect the bottom-line. Also, the return on investing in these types of activities is rarely demonstrated in financial terms when the training and development activities are complete.

This article explores issues regarding management and leadership in the HE sector, and suggests methodologies for evaluating the potential impact and costs incurred by institutions in managing performance and staff-related disputes based on current management practices. It also considers whether formal management training is the answer when considering how to maximise the return on investment in staff development.

## A Background to Leadership in Higher Education

The Bett Report (1999) on pay and conditions in the Higher Education sector recognised the issues relating to management in the sector, and recommended that 'the management of people should be given greater priority at all levels of the HE system'. This led to funding for universities through the HEFCE Rewarding and Developing Staff programme. However, a national survey, conducted in 2007, found that staff in the university sector had the worst perceptions of their managers of any employment sector. More than half of university employees considered their managers were reactive (53%), secretive (52%) and inconsistent (51%), compared to 40%, 42% and 40% respectively in the private sector (Newman, 2008). This indicates that little progress had been made since the Bett Report.

In October 2008, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) published a survey report into the Leadership and Management of conflict at work. The report claimed that two of the top three causes of conflict in the workplace were inadequate line management and warring egos/personality clashes (CIPD, 2008: 2). The report further claimed that it is estimated that HR professionals in the public sector (employers with 1001 to 5000 staff) spend, on average, 4.1 hours every week managing conflict situations (CIPD, 2008: 5). It also indicates that this amount of time will at least be matched by line management.

A key theme running through the findings of a further survey of employers, published by the IRS in 2006 (Suff, 2006: 854), and which focused on managing underperformance, was the fundamental role played by line-managers in managing performance. Sixty-seven per cent of respondents did not believe that their managers were confident or competent in this area. In addition to this, respondents to another survey (Tasker, 2006) reported that on average 16% of their workers could be classed as poor performers.

## The University Context

Universities, like any other employers, are faced with performance and conflict issues which inevitably result in

costs. Some of these costs are easily identifiable and directly attributable to individual cases; others can be estimated by applying hourly rates based on the time taken by individuals involved in these cases, but the remainder will be indirect and not easily quantified and/or attributed.

The case for any investment of limited resources requires the use of reliable and evidence-based data in organisational contexts. The HR Actions and Issues Management System (AIMS), which was developed and introduced by the Human Resources Division at the University of Leicester, in October 2008, has resulted in comprehensive data being available on the number and nature of cases involving issues related to staff (disputes/conflict and capability/poor performance). Therefore it has been possible to quantify and categorise the number of staff performance and staff dispute cases, providing a firm base to examine the cost of these issues to the university over a defined period of time.

## The Cost of Resolving Disputes

During the defined period in our study, a number of cases have resulted in the University entering into compromise agreements with individual staff members, in order to agree termination of employment. The records demonstrate that these cases have involved both poor performance and conduct issues, and the costs can be clearly quantified, including the significant financial implications related to pensions.

Whilst it is difficult to provide clear evidence, a review of timelines on the AIMS database has indicated that on a number of occasions, early intervention by line-managers may have reduced the exposure to risk of potential or actual litigation. In some cases, this may have avoided recourse to compromise agreements.

Although internal and external legal support has been used when seeking resolution to cases, the current nature of the arrangements for the provision of legal services has meant that it has not been possible to attribute costs to individual cases. However, a substantial proportion of these services can be directly attributable to the HR Division.

Some casual research amongst our own HR professional team suggests that the 4.1 hours each week spent managing disputes claimed by the CIPD Survey of 2008 are a very conservative estimate. This has further been supported by HR functions in other universities who have suggested that HR professionals spend between 7.5 and 11.25 hours each week managing disputes. However, as there was no firm data available to support this, the CIPD survey estimate was used as a benchmark to calculate the cost in our study, using the number of HR professionals currently employed to deal with casework, the average hourly cost per HR professional, and the hourly CIPD survey figures (4.1 hours per week), to estimate the total HR professional time and cost spent devoted to dealing with disputes. The total derived cost may then be used to calculate the equivalent number of full-time HR Professionals whose time is spent specifically in resolving disputes.



Within our own institution, HR professionals always work in partnership with line-managers to provide advice and support in the management of cases. Therefore it can be reasonably assumed that the manager will spend at least the same amount of time on the case as the HR professional. In fact the 2008 CIPD survey concluded that, in some cases, line-managers are spending around 20% of their time managing issues associated with conflict. Therefore, by using the current average hourly salary for a manager and the CIPD survey figure (4.1 hours per week), it is possible to calculate the cost of management time spent resolving disputes within a defined period. Estimating the overall direct cost of resolving disputes is then achieved by adding together the actual costs of compromise agreements, professional HR time and management time.

### The Cost of Managing Capability and Poor Performance

Unfortunately, we have not been able to locate any national data on the average time taken to resolve capability and performance cases. However, the AIMS database used at the University of Leicester and anecdotal information from the University's HR Professional team indicate that the HR and management time taken to manage a capability and poor performance case is similar to managing conflict. Therefore, on this basis, the analysis, that has been described above to estimate the cost of resolving disputes, can also be used to estimate the time taken to resolve capability and performance cases.

These calculations are estimates and one of the main weaknesses is that whilst the AIMS database provides a comprehensive and detailed record of cases reported to HR, it excludes all cases that were resolved locally without HR intervention. Therefore the number of cases requiring some form of management and the associated costs are likely to be much higher than those reported here. However, the costs calculated using this methodology were significant, and provided a good base to build a financial case for investing in increasing management capability in these areas.

### Lost Opportunity Costs and Other Considerations

This methodology for estimating the costs of HR and Management time does not end here. We should consider the cost of lost time attributable to individual staff members who either raise grievances or are the subject of disciplinary or performance management issues. Not only is there the time in preparing and attending meetings, but also reduced performance or total loss of output, due to perceived related sickness absence or restrictions/suspensions. For example, in one case an employee who had raised a grievance was on long-term sick leave for a prolonged period of time as a consequence of alleged actions that were directly related to the complaint. Another example is a member of staff who was placed on restricted duties (on full pay) for the period of a misconduct investigation, which again, lasted for a prolonged period of time. These cases will have inevitably affected colleagues, resulting in lost output. There may have also been costs associated with covering the work of absent individuals.

### Other Considerations

Respondents to a survey in *Personnel Today* (Tasker, 2006) reported that an average of 16% of their workers could be classed as poor performers. The survey went on to calculate the cost of poor performance to the UK economy using average pay rates. We feel there was a weakness in this because the full salary of the poor performer was used in the calculations. The implication of this is that it has been assumed that a poor performer does not offer any output in return for their salary. We feel that in all but the most extreme cases there will always be some performance. Therefore for our study we assumed that, on average, a poor performer is at least 30% less effective in their role against a competent performer. Using the figure from the *Personnel Today* survey (16%) we identified the total number of current employees who might be regarded as poor performers, multiplied this by the average annual salary, and, applying an assumed level at which a poor performer is likely to work (we used 70% of a competent performer), estimated the cost to the institution of poor performance. The calculation provided a clear indication of the very high costs associated with poor performance, and provided data to contribute to a compelling case to invest in activities designed to improve performance.

Management within the HE sector is somewhat unique in that academic line-managers are not necessarily assessed or appointed primarily on the basis of their managerial competence. The demands placed on academic staff with regard to research output and teaching commitments mean that, for some, a management of staff, outside of pure academic activity, is a distraction from their primary pursuit of research and scholarship. Kellaway (2006), Murlis and Hartle (1996), and Tahir (2008) (cited in McCaffery, 2010) have further suggested that academia, unlike other public sector professional groups, gives precedence to form-filling over genuine performance improvement, and that under-performance is too often tolerated by managers who themselves end up under-performing in the process.

McCaffery (2010) in his Introduction to *The Higher Education Manager's Handbook* argues that 'we ought to have the same professionalism in the way we lead and manage people as we do towards our research and teaching' and that managerialism is not necessarily incompatible with collegiality.

### Is Management/Leadership Development the Answer?

Twenty-five per cent of respondents to the CIPD survey (2008) reported that improving line-managers' people skills has proved to be effective in dealing with poor performance. However, an IRS survey (Murphy, 2008) reported that 77% of respondents have trouble getting line-managers to attend training. The CIPD survey (2008) also reported that only a third of respondents felt that training in conflict management had led to a reduction in the number of disciplinary and grievance cases.

When referring to management in HE, McCaffery (2010) refers to the 'low status and low esteem which is accorded university management' and, in citing Bryman, 'There is

no scientific basis to management, therefore it does not deserve to be taken seriously' – a view which is too often compounded in university settings by the disregard that some managers themselves have for their positions when it comes to their own training and development – the notion that somehow 'training is for the second eleven'.

As a result of a study into the effect of the manager on learning in the work-place, Eraut *et al.* (1999) found that formal training which included periods of workplace learning as well as 'classroom' learning was regarded as superior to training based exclusively on the classroom model.

In a study into the effect of the manager on learning in the work-place, Eraut *et al.* (1999) found that formal training was regarded to be better if it included periods of workplace learning as well as the classroom. He also found that short, off-the-job courses have little impact unless they are carefully timed and they are followed up at work. This view is supported by a survey of New Zealand employers, which found that at least double the amount of informal against formal training takes place. The respondents to the survey also regarded day-to-day improvement of skills through informal training to be much more important than formal training (Eraut *et al.*, 1999).

These findings are also supported by a study of 'emotion rule learning' by Seymour and Sandiford (2005). They found that informal learning through sharing experiences with colleagues results in more effective performance than formal training. As part of their study, they also highlighted that respondents to their survey generally viewed formal training negatively and 80% of those undertaking formal training would react in either of the following two ways: they pay 'lip service' to the training and absorb the new knowledge, but it does not translate into increased performance in the workplace, or they disagree with the information contained within the training and they develop covert strategies to undermine the training. Furthermore, the study argued that learning through informally sharing experiences with colleagues is more likely to result in a positive response and translate into increased performance in the workplace.

Of course, it should be noted that poor performance or under-performance is not always directly attributable to individual capability or non-effective management, and that poor processes and infrastructures (e.g. IT systems, ways of working or operating procedures) can contribute to ineffective performance. Nonetheless, there is a wealth of literature that supports the argument that traditional management and leadership development in isolation is unlikely to result in more than a marginal increase in organisational performance. For example, Brache and Rummler (cited in Chevalier, 2003) suggest 'If you pit a good performer against a bad system, the system will win almost every time'. Therefore we must be prepared to work with colleagues to integrate creative training into wider organisational development activities, covering the environment (information, resources and incentives) and the individual (knowledge/skills, capacity and motives) (Chevalier, 2003).

## Conclusions

This article has sought to demonstrate some possibilities for focusing on the bottom-line when building a case for increasing leadership capability. It is possible to build a persuasive case for investment in these activities even during the challenging financial times that we are currently in.

However, there are risks. Taking this approach focuses on negative aspects of staff performance and leadership. If handled badly, it could have a detrimental impact on staff morale and, in turn, increase the number of grievances and reduce performance. This is particularly the case during the current uncertain times and the inevitable insecurity that staff are feeling. Therefore it would be advisable to use the methodology described above as a basis for building a case for a balanced approach to performance improvement, incorporating positive approaches to endorse and further develop good performance.

A key message is that promised returns on investment are unlikely to be realised by delivering traditional training solutions. Therefore we must be prepared to work with our colleagues to offer creative learning opportunities that are integrated into wider organisational development initiatives which consider the environmental, organisational and personal factors.

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**Steve Barrow** is the Business Partner for Employee Development, responsible for non-academic staff development, at the University of Leicester (sb387@le.ac.uk). **Margaret Crawford** is the HR Business Partner in the College of Medicine, Biological Sciences and Psychology, at the University of Leicester (mec4@le.ac.uk).

# ‘Supporting Students’: a professional development programme

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**Giles Polglase**, Aberystwyth University

*‘The student experience is such a wide-ranging term, influenced by such a complex variety of factors that it is fruitless to attempt to define it as a single “thing”.’*  
(1994 Group, 2007)

This statement by the 1994 Group of universities suggests that it is meaningless to try to understand why a university succeeds at creating or developing the ‘student experience’ – after all how can you measure the indefinable?

Aberystwyth University is noted for its success in developing a ‘culture’ of supporting the student experience. During the 2009-2010 academic year the University has been commended or recognised for it at both national and international levels. However, the University does not employ professional *Student Experience* managers; nor does it undertake large-scale development projects to enhance its league table standing. If one reason can be highlighted why Aberystwyth University has achieved such positive feedback, it is the commitment of staff, both academic and support, to students’ academic and personal development. This report offers a brief overview of a project – the ‘Supporting Students Module’ – that aims to support staff in developing the ‘student experience’.

## Origins

The origins of the programme developed from a threefold need. *Firstly*, although Aberystwyth University was deemed a success in performance league tables such as the National Student Survey (NSS), other larger and better-resourced higher education institutions had aimed to close the gap or bypass Aberystwyth University by strategically prioritising the ‘Student Experience’ as a means of creating and developing competitive advantages in the student recruitment market.

The University therefore needed a cost-effective mechanism to provide continuing development of the ‘student experience’ and at the same time create further improvements of its student support infrastructure, by way of internal marketing.

*Secondly*, from a survey of students conducted in November 2007, it was established that the traditional view of student support – that is personal tutors acting as the first line of engagement with academic and personal issues – was not the model in operation. Although Aberystwyth University has a well-established personal tutoring model, with academic staff taking the lead in many student issues, the survey revealed that students were actually less likely to contact academic staff for advice than was initially assumed.

The survey revealed the following order of precedence to the following question: ‘If you had an academic or personal issue, who would you seek initial advice or guidance from?’

1) Other students	24%
2) Family and friends	20%
3) Departmental administrative staff	19%
4) Professional support services including Guild of Students	15%
5) Personal tutors	12%
6) External agencies	5%
7) Would not ask	4%
8) Don’t know	1%

It was evident from student responses that when a student had an academic or personal problem, the personal tutor or other member of academic staff ranked fifth in order of priority to assist the student in need.

*Thirdly*, feedback from the Administrators’ Forum, a regular semi-

formal meeting of administrative and support staff, noted that this group wished to be recognised and accredited for the work they provided in supporting students and supporting student learning. Examples of ‘first point of contact’ student support tasks undertaken by non-professional support staff raised by the Administrators’ Forum included: dealing with a student who had suffered a parental bereavement; offering basic support to a student wishing to withdraw; returning module assessment feedback forms to students; being asked specialist academic procedural questions; explaining aspects of academic regulations to students; and dealing with an aggressive student with mental health problems. They also noted that any real initiative to develop student support infrastructure at departmental level should include ‘grassroots’ input from support staff. The Administrators’ Forum also contributed on the subject of what kind of development activities would be required by non-academic staff to enable them with the relevant theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

The ‘Supporting Students Module’ thus aimed to provide an infrastructure which could build on existing best practice and to encourage staff to reflect on and develop their approaches to supporting the needs of a diverse student population.

## Design and Structure

The design of the module was specifically aligned with the university’s Strategic Plan and to the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) strategic priorities. Due to financial limitations, the training support activities would have to add value and enhance quality using limited resources. Through consultation with colleagues in the Centre for the



Development of Staff and Academic Practice (CDSAP), and heads of specific professional support services, it was noted that the majority of *skills* required to deliver a training programme were available within the institution and that the major *resource* commitment was staff time and buy-in to the project. As CDSAP had a strong record of working collegially and intra-institutionally to produce a high quality and extensive CPD programme, the lack of additional resourcing could be overcome by innovative thinking and committed team working. Also, by working with the School for Education and Lifelong Learning, the programme could be accredited, thus addressing the validated training needs issue raised by the Administrators’ Forum.

The module was designed to encourage participation by members of staff with diverse educational backgrounds and specifically as a vehicle to promote continuing professional development to non-academic staff. This encouraged some members of staff with little experience of tertiary education to engage with higher education for the first time. Likewise, as the module would run during normal work hours, flexibility and work-based learning were therefore central to the module design.

A principal consideration was to provide a flexible work-based mode of study which would allow participants to develop new knowledge through reflection of their current role and in relation to prior experience. The module’s intention is to develop staff to understand the academic, social and personal issues contemporary students may face in higher education. It provides the participants with a range of skills to identify, assist, or intervene when a student presents with a particular problem and *signpost* the student to the correct intervention or support service. The module is not a professional qualification in supporting learning and teaching, but focuses more on raising awareness of issues and interventions to ‘non-professional’ support staff e.g. departmental administrators, secretaries, Academic Office staff, etc.

## Intended Outcomes

In broad terms, the intended learning outcomes require participants to demonstrate their ability to reflect on their professional role; and demonstrate the ability to improve their performance by contributing to the academic, personal and social development of students. They are also required to evaluate, in relation to their own professional practice, the implications of diversity.

These intended learning outcomes have been benchmarked against the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) and SEDA values. This was to ensure the module’s validity in the University but also the higher education sector generally. Subsequently, the module has been validated by the Higher Education Academy at UKPSF Standard Descriptor 1 in January 2010. As noted, although learning outcomes are defined, the ability for participants to develop their own understanding is an essential function of this module. Therefore participants’ own learning outcomes are encouraged to emerge by the strategic use of formative assessment and feedback.

## Pedagogic Design

The module was developed using a number of pedagogical methods to create a simple though intensive learning framework. Using the SOLO taxonomy as a basis, a structured series of learning outcomes was defined; however, as noted, ‘emergent learning outcomes’ were encouraged to develop, which were assessed formatively during the module and through feedback questionnaires on completion. The use of constructive alignment ensured learning outcomes were aligned with the assessment from the outset. Furthermore, threshold concepts were integrated either directly into the learning outcomes or embedded in elements of delivery to ensure that learning outcomes were identified and developed throughout the module. Finally, through the use of variation, the learning outcomes were addressed using a number of enactive learning techniques including discussion of readings, workshops, presentations, job shadowing and a simple action research project.

These methods utilise participants’ prior knowledge, understanding and experience in order to draw out, develop and consolidate learning relating to the participants’ own practice.

## Programme Structure

The module is structured to include a taught element and work-based independent study. The work-based nature of the programme means that some learning activities take place during usual work routines. The taught element encourages participants to use their current work context as a basis for reviewing knowledge and understanding of key concepts in student support, and the module also develops key skills necessary for student support work, including listening skills and dealing with situations of conflict or crisis.

The core programme is structured around six professional development workshops which engage directly with the learning outcomes. These include recruitment of students, student transition, diversity of students, retention, disability and learner support, international students and uniquely in Wales – Welsh/English bilingualism. After two workshops, participants begin mentoring support sessions. Experienced members of support staff (normally staff from CDSAP and SELL – the School of Education and Lifelong Learning) meet with participants for a minimum of three one-hour sessions during enrolment on the module. These sessions explore learning outcomes, assist participants to develop their academic skills and help plan an action research project, which forms around 30% of the written assessment element of the module. In the latter stages of enrolment participants are required to undertake a job-shadowing session, in either the central Student Support Service or the Guild of Students, in order to gain a better understanding of the work undertaken by these professional support functions on a daily basis. This is assessed by a reflection of the experience. Finally, the participants present their work-based project, either in their own department or at a centrally timetabled event.

## Module Outcomes

The outcomes of the programme have been tangible. Firstly, at an *institutional* level Aberystwyth University notes that the satisfaction of new students with university staff polled before they arrive, actually improves once they register. Secondly, student continuation figures remain consistently high, with Aberystwyth University performing 2.2% lower than the benchmark figure of 8%.

Members of academic staff receive fewer personal problems from students and are able to deal with specific learning matters; and non-academic staff have become more aware of student issues which may affect their experience at university. Basic student support, embedded at *departmental* level, has improved recognition of the need to support students, which may be by simply listening to, or signposting them towards, an appropriate intervention service. Furthermore, the small action research project has also led to notable changes in working practices in departments. Examples of these projects include:

- Departmental 'supporting students' web pages

- Student buddy and mentoring schemes
- Improved international student inductions
- Support staff-led information leaflets produced on accommodation, exam stress and disability issues
- Improvements in library and information services induction for students.

These small incremental changes have empowered previously passive members of staff to become proactive within their departments and to work more collegially with members of academic staff. Other notable outcomes are that staff engaged on the module feel more empowered in their work: they are more likely to make suggestions on improvements to departmental student support provision to their line managers; and most have continued experimenting with action research as part of their normal work routines.

## Conclusion

As noted, Aberystwyth University has been successful in developing a 'culture' of supporting the student experience. Whilst there is a wide

range of factors contributing to the development of the student experience, by providing accessible and relevant continuing professional development and support to non-academic staff a 'bottom up' staff-owned change in culture can be achieved.

A key theme developed by this report is that non-academic support staff act as a central, though often invisible, pillar in supporting the student experience. This project offers an effective and flexible framework aimed at the development of the 'internal market' and has proved effective and more economical than large-scale projects, professional student experience managers or costly top-down interventions.

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**Giles Polglase** is Assistant Coordinator in the Centre for the Development of Staff and Academic Practice at Aberystwyth University (gop@aber.ac.uk).

# SEDA List Archives: reflections on our community

Anne Oxley, Sheffield Hallam University

A chance conversation at a recent *Educational Developments* editorial board meeting led to the idea of a 'light touch' review of the archives of the SEDA Jiscmail List, initially with the purpose of identifying potential future articles, but actually resulting in so much more.

## What the List aims to achieve

Now in its thirteenth year and with over 750 individual members, this online forum was set up to support SEDA members and staff in member institutions seeking to develop good educational practice in Higher Education, including staff development and curriculum development. The format has changed little since 1998, and the list service is still thriving – testament to the community which 'owns' and contributes to it so extensively.

## Some interesting facts and figures

To begin with just a few interesting facts and figures: in 2010 alone there were almost 450 original postings to the list, averaging 37 per month; of these between 30 and 50% are notices of an extremely diverse range of events and calls for papers; there are also some notices of funding and job opportunities. Then there are the regular items such as updates from Missenden, HEA news and volumes of PESTLHE; alongside these are the regular SEDA events' notices and papers. Occasionally there are personal messages from individuals who may be retiring or changing institutions; however, the bulk of the remaining postings are requests for help, advice and information from SEDA colleagues; more of this later.

There have also been some noticeable patterns over the past calendar year: for example, April, May and October 2010 were almost solely about conference calls and events with online activity peaking in February and at its lowest, unsurprisingly, in December; most activity took place in the first half of the year. Another trend seems to be for short bursts of vigorous activity where one posting triggers several others in quick succession. The archive only allows us to see how many responses come from colleagues directly through the list, but we know from experience there is often much further correspondence 'offline', that is, when respondents email the original poster directly.

### What has been discussed?

Queries from members have been diverse, ranging from finding out if institutions run local 'academies' to offers to host overseas visitors to come to SEDA events, and from supporting overseas and off-site teaching colleagues to student module evaluations. In 2010, by far the most productive posting, receiving responses from 75 colleagues, was about PGCEs being compulsory for new staff. Other topics which received a high number of responses were: targets for HEA membership which drew responses from 15 institutions and generated a number of offline email conversations; the extent to which skills in teaching using case study methodology are incorporated into PGCEs, and the funding of PGCEs. Videos of teaching also elicited a wide-ranging response and the subsequent sharing of numerous openly accessible online resources.

### What have we learnt?

Although the questions posed by colleagues are often enough in themselves to generate valuable dialogue within our own institutions, or can just feel somewhat comforting in that other institutions are facing similar issues, we can all benefit from the summary responses compiled by colleagues who made the original posts. Julie Hall, for example, very usefully shared her summary of responses on embedding employability skills in the curriculum and others published a table of results about the current status of Educational Development Units (EDUs) and about numbers of HEA Memberships.

### Reflecting on our 'social history'

In undertaking this analysis of the SEDA list the most striking aspect has been a reflection on the history of educational development and HE more broadly. We can see threads on TQEF, HEFCE initiatives such as TLTP, FDTL and CETLs, the LTSN and introduction of the HEA. There have been long discussions about the nature of EDUs, which are still going on today. It has been interesting to look back on the types of jobs advertised such as learning technologists and to note the salary comparisons between then and now! It has also been a way to track the career moves of individuals, and so much more.

Providing a notable example of how times do and do not change, there was a string of responses in 2001 about making completion of PGCEs compulsory, mirrored ten years later in 2010 by exactly the same debate. There were postings

about lecturer workloads in relation to distance learning, assessment of groupwork and evaluation of learning and teaching activities, again reflected in more recent years. A personal favourite from 2004, demonstrating just how much approaches to technologies have changed, was a national workshop on handheld computers in Universities and Colleges, focusing on giving lecturers, teachers, staff developers and learning technologists the necessary conceptual and practical background to make informed decisions about deploying handheld computers in their departments, classes and courses!

### Concluding comments

The sense of a supportive and engaged community is as strong as ever, with many instances of thanks from people who have had names and contacts suggested, have received ideas and links to resources, and who have been directed to particular events. The SEDA values are embodied in the way the List works and in the confidence colleagues have to post, sometimes seemingly naive questions, safe in the knowledge they will receive a supportive response.

The List continues to be a good indicator of the issues Educational Developers are facing and the community benefits collectively when colleagues collate and share the responses received – a practice SEDA would wholeheartedly encourage. And, to return to the original reason for this article, please remember to think about offering articles to *Educational Developments* based on your findings.

Let us all continue to value, contribute to and benefit from the SEDA List, and to end, here is a recent quote which captures just one of the many positive aspects: 'How wonderful the SEDA list is when you need a quick solution!'

The full archive can be found at: [SEDA@JISCMail.AC.UK](mailto:SEDA@JISCMail.AC.UK).

**Anne Oxley FSEDA** is a Senior Lecturer in Managing Educational Change at Sheffield Hallam University ([a.oxley@shu.ac.uk](mailto:a.oxley@shu.ac.uk)).

## Information for Contributors

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

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

For more information please see: [www.seda.ac.uk/publications](http://www.seda.ac.uk/publications)



# 'To defer or not to defer'...why it may not be the question

**Helen Gale**, University of Wolverhampton

*Jo Peat's article, published in Educational Developments 11.3, September 2010, stimulated me to reflect upon an issue of some importance in the lives of our new lecturers. I offer here some additional reflections drawing upon the responses which informed the initial article.*

*'It will be a condition of receipt of income from the Student Finance Plan for the costs of learning that institutions require all new academics with teaching responsibilities to undertake a teaching training qualification.'* (Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance, p. 48 (<http://hereview.independent.gov.uk/hereview/report/>))

'To defer or not to defer?' is probably not a question that participants ask themselves on Day One of any course. It is unlikely that anyone comes onto a programme intending to defer or intending to fail. However – just as with students and non-submission – we have to acknowledge that possibility, build that consideration into planning the programme and create strategies for minimising that risk and maximising success.

The responses that Jo Peat got from her SEDA mailbase query about the completion of PGCerts, which preceded the original article, seemed to me to have a rather quality-assurance, authoritarian, audit-framed feel to them (i.e. How can we make our staff complete this qualification?). Do you remember the Aesop's fable about a dispute between the sun and the wind, each claiming that they could get the man to take his coat off? The wind blew and blew, but the man only hugged his coat tighter and tighter. The sun shone...and the man took his coat off. Obviously, this is far too simple an

analogy (and far too soft for these neo-liberal, post Browne, post-Comprehensive Spending Review days). We can't be doing with all this 'treat them gently and lovingly and they'll all do what we want them to' and expect to be taken seriously. However, what we can do is borrow from the 'risk assessment' framework rather than the audit culture when taking part in any problem-solving as Educational Developers.

Perhaps this could be approached in the same way as we might support a team who presented us with the issue of undergraduates and non-submission of assignments: looking at it through the lens of curriculum design analysis. If we also involve our 'students' as colleagues in a joint venture of problem-solving rather than 'otherising' (Fanon, 1991) them and ourselves as teacher and taught, then we may be able to see this issue from other perspectives. Obviously, in reality, this should be done in conjunction with the course team and as a problem-solving exercise rather than as a one-sided 'the expert recommends', which is an approach guaranteed to end in collegial disaster.

So, with the above proviso and in the spirit of dialogue, and also recognising that the course team will obviously have discussed some of these issues, the following may suggest some other ways of looking at the deferral issue, from a fellow PGCert designer currently grappling with redesign and revalidation. (All the quotes are taken from the original article).

*'Out of a cohort of 13, seven requested a deferral.'*

*'The participants "gave various reasons" for deferral.'*

Q: We might begin with a question of analysis about what exactly is the issue. What kind of an issue is this? What is the problem we are trying to solve? If

deferral is the symptom, what is the underlying cause?

APC: (= Answers for Possible Consideration ..... as distinct from A = Answer)  
Approach this as a research exercise. Look closely at your data. What exactly do they say about deferral? When exactly do they make this decision that they cannot complete? Who exactly is supporting them in this decision? Who do they think will support them next year when they have not completed? Why do they really think they will have more time to complete next year? Have you ever known a year when you have had less to do than the year before? What do we know about 'non-submission' from the literature?

*'..it has lost the kudos of being overseen by those considered to be more serious academics.'*

Q: Is deferral a value issue – do staff not value this qualification or those who teach it? Do they see their own expertise as subject academics as something which has no value in this programme... and therefore neither do they value your discipline?

APC: Consider reinstating the credit rating at M level. This tells staff that it does have a recognised external and sectoral value. Ensure that the educational development staff teaching on the programme are themselves qualified to the highest levels and are publishing in their own field. Team teach in conjunction with subject specialists who are sympathetic to the importance of pedagogy. Use your National Teaching Fellows. Get sympathetic 'graduates' of the programme to join you for short spots. Have subject specialists in Schools acting as mentors/teaching observers in order to integrate discipline-specific pedagogy. Have your first session introduced by a Dean/Associate Dean who has an excellent research record,

but also values learning and teaching. Get the completion certificates awarded individually by the Vice-Chancellor at a small lunch.

*'..the PG Cert...is seen as a poor second to discipline-related priorities..'*

Q: Is deferral an *academic identity* issue? Are staff saying or implying, 'I don't see myself (my university doesn't see me) as a teacher in higher education. I'm an academic – teaching is something I only do when I have to'.

APC: Use discipline experts who are excellent teachers as mentors for your PGCert participants. Recruit sympathetic subject-based peers who can act as intermediaries between you as course leaders and your 'students', and also support them. Persuade recent graduates of the programme to become mentors, because they understand the structure of the assessment and can offer relevant support, with the knowledge of where they themselves had difficulties in completing.

*'..the PGCert is not tied to probation or appraisal.'*

Q: Is deferral a *professional achievement* issue? Who cares if they do not complete on time? What is the role of the participants' line managers?

APC: Get Associate Deans/Deans/ Heads of Department on your side – not just seeing staff completion of the PGCert as a quality audit mechanism, but as a quality enhancement experience – or even as an improved statistical opportunity. If the line manager of the participant endorses the PGCert as an important qualification and experience, this should be communicated to the participant during appraisal, even if it is not 'tied' to it. If the 'graduates' of this programme are also the teachers who improve student retention, achievement and evaluations, then the managers have a vested (money!) interest in supporting this staff development programme. If the Browne report comes to implementation then University management will put pressure on Deans in some universities to ensure that they set target figures for staff learning and teaching

accreditation. They might as well begin now.

*'We have done well in retaining our initial cohort.'*

*'The taught course runs for 24 weeks.'*

Q: Is deferral a *retention* issue? Have staff been dropping out throughout the course?

APC: Apparently not. However, the article talks about *weekly* sessions. Keep face-to-face attendance enough to create cohort coherence, but not so as to become a burden. Weekly attendance may suggest a lack of freedom for people used to organising their own time and space. We need to practise what we preach in terms of work-based learning. (We do nine whole days face-to-face for 60 credits, with the rest online.) Integrate assessment with attendance. Use contributions to the (early) online discussions as part of the assessment, rather than separating it into a distinct portfolio submission which has to be submitted (or not!) at a later date. Use face-to-face time for group presentations of issues which are assessed there and then by peers and tutors.

*'I am very behind in coursework and will not have enough time to work towards the assessments.'*

Q: Is deferral an *assessment* issue?

APC: It may be; otherwise there probably would have been a higher rate of prompt submission. As above, integrate assessment with participation rather than separate it out. Are you 'over-assessing'? Can you negotiate the assessment or customise it to each individual – without giving the teaching team an unbearable amount of supervision responsibility?

*'...a belief that such a course is not of intrinsic benefit to participants.'*

Q: Is deferral a '*value for money*' issue? Can participants identify what they are getting out of it? If staff can't see what they are getting out of it, then (just like students) they are less likely to complete.

APC: Race (2010, p. 24) talks about

getting onto the 'WIFM' broadcast network – 'what's in it for me?' If by participating in the PGCert programme personal teaching becomes more interesting, more rewarding, and particularly more effective and more efficient – especially if it gives more time for individual research, or better still, for integrating research with teaching – then it could be that motivation to submit is increased. Is it possible to add some extrinsic motivation? (Our staff get a salary increment on completion – admittedly agreed in more generous times.)

*'Colleagues (will) participate, we hope, out of interest and enthusiasm.'*

Q: Given the other parameters of the context that have been noted, is this an unreal expectation?

APC: The participants already have 200 hours on their workload (which is generous if it represents a real reduction in teaching hours or research targets). Make it worth their while to join and pursue and finish the programme. Resource it well (difficult to say in these days, when tea and coffee seem to have become a luxury), but make attendance on the PGCert a real quality experience. Promote the latest in practical use of e-learning technology. Argue for the programme to take place in rooms that have been equipped with the most recent pedagogically-sound environment. If staff are being pushed by management to engage with e-learning, then 'If I really have to learn all this stuff, then it's probably better to do it together as a group and get recognised for it, rather than have to do it all in my own time'. Have some inspiring outside speakers or make sure that any resources, virtual or otherwise, are top quality.

*'We hoped that there would be an intrinsic motivation of the participants to attend in order to support their peers.'*

Q: Is intrinsic motivation for peer support really likely to override other considerations, given that the participants are also 'less experienced at working in cross-disciplinary

networks, particularly those which centre on learning and teaching’.

APC: Just like reluctant students, build in opportunities to demonstrate ‘intrinsic motivation’! If assessment says ‘prepare and lead one group seminar based on the proposed/actual data of your assignment’, then it may be more likely that both attendance and support will be increased. Put the notes for preparing and leading the seminar immediately into the portfolio rather than create as an ‘essay’ later. We need to develop more innovative ways of assessing work-based learning process and artefacts.

### Conclusions – be strategic

As one of those awfully smug postcards/e-sayings goes: ‘If all else fails...lower your standards.’ Yes, you might have to argue your case, but is 100% submission and achievement of a PGCert for all 25 staff who started the course within one year better than 25% submission with 6 distinctions and 18 non-submissions? Which is better for the institution? Which is better for learning and teaching? How many disgruntled staff do you want

to deal with next year, who have this qualification (as they might feel) ‘hanging’ over them.

At the risk of not promoting the ultimate achievement/top grade for the greatest number, be strategic. For most of our staff, the grade that is achieved is not important, but the achievement of the qualification is. Therefore, encourage people to see the qualification, not the grade, as their target. If they need the letters after their name, but don’t see themselves as having a career in excelling in teaching in higher education, then go with them. Those who want to get an A grade and distinguish themselves as great teachers in their career will probably do so. Those who don’t won’t. Point out that the rate of success for staff after the first year, when they are not attending the programme, but working on their own, is not good. They are more likely to succeed if they complete the assignments in the first year. In efficiency terms, where are you going to get the extra resources to support those who defer, while also supporting a new cohort?

Give extensions according to the university rules, but no more.

Of course there may be staff (just like students) who hate every minute of your programme, despise what you value and make every attempt to trivialise what you are trying to do. Don’t drop the standards of pass/fail. Don’t pass staff who should fail. Don’t give A grades when staff deserve a D according to the criteria, ...but design in encouragement and submission.

Is underpinning all this a question of status, power and influence? Is it the oft-debated question of the relationship of those of us in Educational Development to those in high places?

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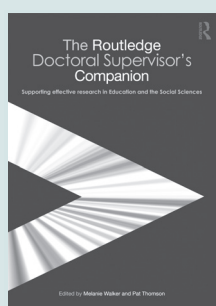
**Helen Gale** is an Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching, at the University of Wolverhampton (H.Gale@wlv.ac.uk).

## Book Review

### The Routledge Doctoral Supervisor’s Companion

Edited by Melanie Walker and Pat Thomson

2010, London and New York:  
Routledge  
ISBN 10: 0-415-48414-6 (pbk)



This is the second volume of Routledge doctoral companions. The first was geared towards the interests of doctoral students in the fields of education and the social sciences and this volume is concerned with supervision. Their purpose is to provide discussion of issues rather than act as advice books or provide accounts of the experiences of doctoral students (although there is some of each of these embedded in a number of the articles). Pervading the text is the belief that the relationship between supervisor and the student is essentially about human contact, where although there are profound issues of power and authority and the potential for institutional over-regulation, these can be mediated through appropriate strategies.

In part one, there is a useful review of the growth and development of the doctorate and doctoral students in the context of the rapidly changing political, economic, and social environments of universities. The editors point to the ways in which doctoral studies have become increasingly institutionalised. They discuss the ways in which ‘codes of practice’ and ‘transferable skills development’, as key components of contemporary doctoral study, potentially change the very nature of the doctorate with positive but, in their view, mainly negative consequences.

The second part deals with pedagogic issues in supervision. An underpinning argument of Walker’s paper is that doctoral education needs to be seen as a process of lifelong learning and development of capability rather than taking a narrow focus on training and skills. In a humanistic spirit she writes that if students develop their capability they become ‘bearers of the public good through the knowledge they have acquired’, so that supervisors and students ‘not only acquire knowledge to be social scientists, but that we also form a moral perspective...to improve lives in society’ (p. 36). This theme is pursued in two papers that look at pedagogical issues in the development of supervisory practices. There is a useful article on the professional doctorate which provides



both a cohort experience for students and the individual supervisory experience. There are also two papers that seem to be more practical on developing understanding of the literature for the doctoral degree. At a deeper level these papers emphasise the relationship between supervisor and student and the way in which developing the literature can become a shared enterprise with a community of scholars.

The third part deals with the challenges of supervision that arise from the changing environment of doctoral study, although, ultimately, this section is a somewhat eclectic mixture of themes. There are papers that deal with issues of supervising part-time and international students but also quite esoteric papers on aspects of doctoral research. One contribution, a feminist perspective on doctoral supervision,

is framed as an intellectual biography. It is written in a personal (but academic) style which is different from the dominant tone of the other papers which are written in a traditional distancing style.

Although there are a number of repetitions within this volume, it raises many interesting issues and could provide, as the editors suggest, a forum for discussion within the graduate studies community and especially for those management educators and managers with responsibility for research training and development.

**John McAuley** is Emeritus Professor of Organisation Development and Management, in the Sheffield Business School, at Sheffield Hallam University.

## Sheffield Hallam launches the 'Change as Usual Network'

**Dr. Abbi Flint**, Sheffield Hallam University

The SEDA Research and Development grant projects may receive modest funding, but their impact can be much longer than the research or development project itself. In 2007-2008, I and Anne Oxley were awarded a grant to explore, through a small benchmarking exercise, how some universities in England were using approaches and techniques from the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and Leadership Foundation for Higher Education's (LFHE) national Change Academy Programme to support local change initiatives. Following the completion of the project, we found there were a considerable number of colleagues from a range of institutions who wanted to continue the conversations we had begun around fostering cultural change. In particular, a growing number of colleagues had run, or were considering running, an internal change academy at their institution, and welcomed the chance to share the challenges and successes they were experiencing in using this approach.

To create the opportunity for these conversations to continue we offered to co-ordinate a peer network of colleagues interested in change, as a longer term outcome of our SEDA-

funded research project. The Change as Usual Network was set up in 2010 and is co-ordinated by myself and Anne at Sheffield Hallam University, and, on the 1 February, 25 colleagues from 11 different institutions, the HEA and the LFHE, gathered at Sheffield Hallam for its inaugural meeting.

The network meets twice a year and is supported by the HEA and LFHE. At the first meeting delegates took part in a change masterclass led by Anne Sibbald, Director of Organisational Development at Glasgow Caledonian University, on using internal change academies to bring institutional strategies to life. Anne was one of the original team that developed the national change academy and has run a number of internal change academies at her own institution around strategy implementation, cultural change and curriculum redesign. She drew on these experiences and expertise to provide a fascinating session on the benefits of the change academy model for fostering cultural change.

After lunch there were lively discussions around three 'hot topics' that had been suggested by members of the network: working in different

cultures and contexts within institutions; getting management buy-in to alternative approaches to change; and supporting staff (with a particular focus on fostering creativity). Delegates shared the challenges they were facing, and suggested ideas and ways they were addressing these challenges.

The next meeting of the network will be hosted at another institution in the autumn. Colleagues are welcome to join the network's JISCMail ([www.jiscmail.ac.uk](http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk)) discussion list CHANGE-AS-USUAL. Or contact Abbi Flint ([a.l.flint@shu.ac.uk](mailto:a.l.flint@shu.ac.uk)) or Anne Oxley ([a.oxley@shu.ac.uk](mailto:a.oxley@shu.ac.uk)) for more information.

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The Change Academy programme (<http://tinyurl.com/changeacademy>).

**Dr. Abbi Flint** is a Senior Lecturer in Educational Change at Sheffield Hallam University.

# SEDA News

'May you live in interesting times' is regarded as an ancient curse. Our community is living with the announcement of the largest impending cuts in funding, significant changes to the structure of the student fees system and continuing public protests. With the agenda for cuts set it may appear that the sector is in a state of hiatus – the condemned convict awaiting execution. However, it is at times such as this when the work of SEDA becomes essential in providing an independent voice. As I write this, the forthcoming legislation is being prepared and you will be aware from Julie Hall's statement on the SEDA list that 'we are also contributing to discussions at a senior level on enhancing teaching quality in the lead up to the production of the White Paper'.

SEDA's voice is also being heard in regard to the recent HEA consultation exercise on the UKPSF. Our response can also be found on the SEDA JISC list. See too SEDA's letter published in the *Times Higher* on the 4 February.



*Fellowship holders being presented with certificates at the November Conference*

Last November saw another successful SEDA Conference and in this issue we have included contributions from two keynote speakers. The new SEDA Fellowship framework was officially launched with Fellowship holders being presented with their new certificates. From January 2011 onward the new framework will be implemented in stages; first with the implementation of the new Associate Fellowship level. The SEDA Executive has ratified the appointment of a Co-ordinator to be responsible for running and supporting all levels of Fellowship in the framework. Calls for expressions of interest from those seeking to take on this role will be circulated via the SEDA list.

During this year we are committed to reviewing the arrangements for CDP for Fellowships along with refreshing the package of benefits for holders. Later this year we will be running the revised version of our successful online course for those seeking FSEDA status. For colleagues earlier in their careers, our popular residential Summer School event, 'Supporting Educational Change', will be held from 19 to 21 July.

**Tony Brand**

## Don't miss out on the next two SEDA conferences

The SEDA Spring Teaching Learning and Assessment Conference 2011 will be held in Edinburgh on May 5 and 6 where we will debate and discuss the academic for the 21st Century. The event will focus on the changed and changing roles of academic staff and how their work can be supported, developed and enhanced. Mirroring some of the work which has taken place in Scotland within the QAA quality enhancement theme 'Graduates for the 21st Century', there will be an opportunity to consider the desired attributes of the academic profession. Keynotes will be given by Ray Land, Professor of Higher Education and Director of the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning Enhancement at the University of Strathclyde, Lorraine Stefani, Professor and Director of Academic Development, University of Auckland, and by Aaron Porter, President of the National Union of Students.

The Annual conference will take place on November 17 and 18 in Birmingham. The conference will explore the use of technology in teaching and learning, from the perspective of the underlying pedagogy. Sessions will examine the effective use of all forms of technology – be that via Virtual Learning Environments, websites, telephones, podcasts, videos, audience response systems and more.

Please see the SEDA website ([www.seda.ac.uk](http://www.seda.ac.uk)) for further information including booking forms for the Spring conference, and details of the call for proposals for the Annual conference.

### Supporting Educational Change (Professional Qualification Course)

Congratulations to Ursula Lucas of the University of the West of England, who has passed this course.

### Forthcoming events

- **SEDA Spring Teaching Learning and Assessment Conference 2011 – Academics for the 21st Century**  
Thursday 5 - Friday 6 May 2011, Edinburgh
- **SEDA Annual Conference 2011 – Using Technology to Enhance Learning**  
Thursday 17 - Friday 18 November 2011, Aston Business School Conference Centre

### SEDA Fellowships

Congratulations to John Lea of Canterbury Christ Church University and Darren Comber of the University of Aberdeen, who have become SEDA Fellowship holders.