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Contents

Developing tribes and territories

SEDA Conference keynote, *November 2006*

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Introduction

I'm immensely grateful to have been given the task today of thinking about development tribes and territories. I want to suggest that there are development tribes who live close by one another on overlapping territories but who rarely meet. There is remarkably little communication. Caricatures are frequently drawn and large and crude assumptions made by one tribe about another.

Emerson said 'Who you are speaks so loudly that I can't hear what you're saying', wisely pointing to the ways in which we pay attention not just to the message but also to the messenger. Our perceptions about a speaker make an immense difference to the way we hear or whether we listen at all. That, I think, is part of the apparent problem I'd like to discuss with you today. There are people in this world whose beliefs and values and ways of working make us feel uncomfortable, so that we look away and decline to listen. Some of those with whom we work in universities may make us feel like that too. Where you seem to come from makes a difference.

It has always interested me to note both how similar and how different are the worlds that make up higher education – and to note also the extraordinary myths that one part of the education world holds about another. I remember a colleague at Warwick saying how easy it must be to do educational development in a new university because there everyone does as they're told. Similarly, I have often been advised that in old universities no-one cares about teaching. This is an equally daft generalisation, of course. It suggests that we often make up what we do not know.

Notions of identity and community are very powerful aspects of organisations. Every so often something has happened that has, for me, demonstrated the strength of identity and community.

In universities the disciplinary dimension, as we know, is highly significant. One can't understand why things happen the way they do without taking disciplines into account. Some while ago I accepted the poisoned chalice of a presentation to a Mathematics Department to talk about how they might observe one another teaching and offer feedback. I suggested, among other things, that gender might be an area of interest – who says what and to whom and who responds – and so on. You'll not find this extraordinary. The response from one Mathematician was swift and crisp. 'I never take any notice of gender', he retorted. 'Besides, what's the use of knowing a student's gender – you can't change their gender.' I suggest to you that this comment would have been inconceivable in a Humanities or a Social Studies department. Disciplines make a difference.

Disciplinary difference extends to language and all that is associated with it. I spoke recently to a senior Physicist in a research-intensive institution. The University's Postgraduate Diploma in learning and teaching had exposed him to a little light sociology. He, like his colleagues, had found it hard going, till he realised, he said, that in Physics words mean one thing only. In Sociology they can have a whole cluster of meanings. Once that penny had dropped, he felt he could read more freely. His colleagues, he felt, never reached that realisation. Language makes a difference and marks our tribes and territories.

There is an academic and an administrative split. Craig McInnis in Australia has explored the differences between academics' and administrators' views of the university and how it should work. I was once asked by a senior administrator – when our centre was to be moved from the central administration into Humanities – how I would be able to find out what was happening in the University. He obviously felt that being surrounded by academics would obscure my view of the administration. You can tell a lot about a person by the way they refer to 'the University'.

As people with a development role, often uneasily poised between the academic and the management or administrative parts of the University, we can get caught by this very powerful demarcation. Soon after I arrived in Humanities, a senior Professor in a lift expressed concern at my department's arrival. 'My colleagues and I have been talking', he said. 'We feel that this building is for people like us – it's not for people like you'. It is indeed a tribal world.

Imagining development

Imagine that you had the chance of designing a university from scratch. How would you think of development, and what would you design in to make development happen? This is a 'green field site' question that has troubled few people since the 1960s in the UK. A much more pragmatic question that senior leaders have is: you've only so much resource to put into supporting development and you want to make your organisation and your staff work better – so where should you invest and how should you organise?

A recent research study, Developing Capability in the University, drew on 18 international case studies, to show not what was good practice or bad practice but what the choices are when you organise for development and what is likely to happen if you make those choices. It was a very interesting exercise and the report benefited from the detailed feedback of five Vice-Chancellors, among others.

We used the phrase 'capability development' as the least loaded term we could find. This is how we defined it:

   '…all of the provision and processes that are designed to enrich the practice, and thus enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and well-being of individuals, activities and the organisation.'

Capability development here includes:
• Staff skills development
• Educational development (development of curriculum and assessment)
• Academic development (the development of academics' expertise)
• Faculty development (development of academic staff, usually relating to teaching, in the US)
• Organisational development (focused at an institutional level).

Notice how broadly development is distributed in the institution. Educational developers do it. Human Resources does it. These are the people with development written on their door. Others do it as part of their brief. The Research Support Office, the International Office and the Enterprise Unit do it, in relation to their areas of work. But also, senior leaders do it, by choosing what to fund and whom to employ. Academic departments do it. Disciplinary communities do it, often by conferences and email. And also – a terrifying thought – development happens without anyone consciously paying attention to it. It is simply a

phenomenon that can and often does occur as people go about their work. Most problems are not solved – they just dissolve, or re-form another way.

Developing tribes and territories

When we see tribalism in others it often seems bizarre. Here I'd like to take the metaphor of tribes and territories and – perhaps rather riskily – apply it to the development communities. I'd like to point out difference in development tribes and the consequences of the ways we deal with – or don't deal with – difference, in order to start a discussion.

So…what about us? Let's take a quick first look before getting into some detail. Recently I went to another conference – the annual Staff Development Conference – an event very like the SEDA Conference and also quite unlike it. There I heard Rob Cuthbert warn against the dangers of hyper-rationality in trying to understand organisations. I heard a speaker from the BBC talk about the ways that Greg Dyke had tried to make that huge bureaucracy a more creative place. I heard Madeleine Atkins, Vice-Chancellor at Coventry, say what she thought were the issues in improving teaching, research and third stream activities in universities. All very interesting you might think.

What was even more interesting was that there were only one or two people at the SEDA Conference who were at that conference. So isn't this a little odd? We have a community of staff developers attending one conference and a community of educational developers attending another – yet all are working in the same universities, with the same staff, often on much the same issues.

May I offer you the analogy of the operating theatre in which the surgeon and the anaesthetist work entirely independently of each other and never speak. Each may ply his or her trade to the highest possible standard – but the patient will lose from this lack of co-ordination. Actually it's rather an odd metaphor and it leaves you to decide whether you see educational development as surgery or a form of anaesthetic. You may reject both options perhaps.

It would be easy to see this separation as complete madness – and indeed some universities do put all their formal development function in one place – it's probably the commonest pattern in UK pre-1992 institutions. Can't we get everyone together so we can all work in a coordinated way? Well, perhaps. That would be rational – or maybe hyper-rational. A good friend of mine works for a major multinational company that makes very large aeroplanes. He is a designer. He tells me of the constant tussle between design and manufacture. The people in the factory just want to make the plane. 'Can we have the drawings now?' 'No', say the designers, 'it's really tricky work, we've got a lot to think about – there's creativity going on here and you can't have it to order. Solving a problem takes as long as it takes. In the end it's about someone thinking hard till they get it right.' Meanwhile the marketing team, who are another tribe again, say 'Will you lot get your act together and build some planes because we've just sold 150 of them'. You can imagine the tight-lipped meetings. And we haven't even

mentioned the estates tribe, the finance tribe, the personnel tribe.

Tribes and territories are natural and inevitable aspects of human existence. Tribes often cohere around what they believe in and value. Territories arise from this because of what we are dealing with and because of resourcing and political advantage. You'll recall the old saying about every Welsh village having two places of worship – the one you go to and the one you don't. We define ourselves as much by what we are not as by what we are. So let's not think we can hyper-rationalise ourselves out of tribes and territories. They will always be with us. And they serve some useful functions.

We may be better employed thinking about the various communities, being more aware of others and seeing what trading can be done and partnerships formed. Or you may take a more radical view.

The history of Educational Development in the UK

Can we learn anything about development tribalism and its effects from the history of educational development in the UK? What a success story this has been. It has been said that at one time you could get all the educational developers in the UK into a phone box. There are now thousands of educational developers, but few phone boxes. So let's celebrate the immense progress that has been made. We have a large and self-confident educational development community that is increasingly able to theorise itself. Almost all new lecturers have to be trained to teach – that's a major step when you think of attitudes even ten years ago in most universities. Much more attention is now paid to the quality of teaching. Its importance is recognised much more. Excellence in teaching is more highly valued, on the whole. We're not there yet by any means – but let's recognise what has been achieved.

SEDA has been absolutely central to this. SEDA is a really impressive example of how people who really believe in something and are prepared to work at it can make something happen, often in the face of apathy or outright opposition. SEDA has provided a point of coherence around concern for teaching and learning and many have gained from this. And SEDA, fascinatingly, has endured, through major changes in the support for teaching at national level.

There have been changes over the years in the way that the educational development community – itself a highly questionable concept – has viewed itself and its role. My personal impression is that fifteen years ago educational development used to be:

- Practised in opposition to research, which was a bad thing. Pedagogic research was not, at that time, much spoken about
- Entirely focused on the development of individuals (projects came later)
- Not at all strategic – in the sense of being tied into what the institution was trying to achieve.

It's a little different now. The research-teaching link has become a mainstream concern in the last several years. There is the beginning of an interest in the leadership and management of teaching – but note how recently this has happened. There is an increasing tendency to be strategic; the HEFCE requirement to have a learning and teaching strategy in return for funding has been significant here. So educational development does shift its focus over time.

However, teaching is still at the centre of this world rather than academic work as a whole. So, although there have been some significant shifts over the last few years, I would conclude that educational development remains a rather separate community from a number of others that do development, in a number of ways. So the big question is, just how separate do we – as educational developers – wish to be? Is there ever a time when one would want to review that position?

Often it is focus that produces progress. It may have been that the way that teaching got attention was by singling it out. And that single-minded, almost dogged pursuit of teaching and learning has paid major dividends.

What I would say here, very much in the spirit of the Developing Capability report, is that consequences flow from that single-mindedness – what one might perhaps think of as costs. The first has to do with slipping out of alignment with the nature of academic work in the 21st century. The second with over-separation from development aspects that sit with the other big tribe, HR. The third is the risk of living in an intellectual compartment and the fourth is in separation from the academic heart of the university. I'd like to discuss each of these now – but really in the spirit of saying that these are likely consequences of a particular course. My claim is that the more we think of teaching as separate from other aspects of academic work, and the more we think of educational development as being different from other forms of development, the greater the chances of these things being so.

Academic work in the 21st century

How does a concentration on teaching look in 2006 as against 1986? Academic work is becoming more complex in all sorts of ways – I shall pick out only two significant items here. Firstly, and quite fundamentally, one source of complexity lies in the kinds of knowledge and ways of knowing with which universities now engage. Universities have to find ways of engaging more flexibly with the world and its knowledge beyond the university. Mode 2 knowledge is transdisciplinary, often problem-focused. The growth of third stream activity blurs previously clear boundaries around teaching and research. Epistemologically it is a less orderly world. Some would see the university's role as being to accept and even encourage this more fluid and turbulent way of being and knowing. Ron Barnett suggests we accept and celebrate 'epistemological pandemonium'. Research and teaching, he suggests, have changed roles:

'Research…has to be understood as the promotion of supercomplexity in our public understandings…teaching, on the other hand, has to be construed as the production of supercomplexity in the minds of students and as the development of the capacity on the part of students to handle the resulting dislocation.' (Barnett, 2000, p.143)

I'd push it a little further. I'm not sure that I can any longer tell the difference between teaching and research in this world where the academy and the 'real' world are dissolving into each other and where knowledges are more varied and more fluid. Are you teaching or researching when you engage in third stream activity, when you act as a consultant to a company, find out what they are doing and advise them how to change and help them how to change? When you gather together a research team with senior and less experienced members, and the less experienced learn from their more established colleagues, is it teaching or research? Bring it home to your own work. When you run an educational development project – clarify some concepts, go out and gather existing practice, develop practice, report back, persuade people to change, evaluate what has happened – are you teaching or are you researching? Or are you slipping continually from one role to another, and using a really rather sophisticated understanding of context, audiences, stakeholders, approaches to change and so on? Isn't what you are really doing working with knowledge and with individuals and communities – is it all knowledge management? I don't know if that is the right term – it has its own baggage – but it seems clear that the terms teaching and research, when used as if they were entirely distinguishable, are most unhelpful, calling to mind the undergraduate classroom on the one hand and the research laboratory on the other. Of course at the extremes one can think of activities that are clearly research or clearly teaching. But an increasing amount of what happens in and around universities is just not that clear cut any more. This is perhaps the train of thought that led Ernest Boyer to his four scholarships.

Given the complexity and tensions in the nature of work in universities, what does this mean for the capabilities that staff in the university require? Some have argued for the need to review these capabilities that are needed in a complex or supercomplex world, with multiple communities of practice. It may be that academic workers need, in effect, a set of broad capabilities that equate to a new academic literacy that spans all aspects of academic (and academic support) work. Certainly the requirement for an ethical code becomes more salient as previously distinct forms of activity start to blend and staff find themselves working in novel situations and relationships.

Another reason for rethinking our separateness is that focusing on one thing means, inescapably, not focusing so much on something else. The something else is academic work as a whole. I take a very clear value position on this. It seems to me that the idea of an academic identity is of immense value. In this ironic and post-modern world I take a modern view that being academic is something of value that needs questioning and debating, but that should be kept alive and strong and constantly renewed.

The new Staff and Educational Development Award

Helen King FSEDA, University of Plymouth

In October 2006, SEDA piloted a new Professional Development Framework (PDF) award in Staff and Educational Development. For the first time, as well as introducing the new award as part of the PDF, SEDA itself ran a programme to support participants in developing a portfolio to achieve the award. This programme is supported through peer group and tutor interaction entirely online allowing colleagues from all over the UK (and beyond!) to participate. As well as achieving the PDF award, successful participants are eligible to receive the SEDA Associate Fellowship. The programme is currently in its second round and SEDA hopes to continue to run it on a biannual basis. Many congratulations to our first cohort of successful participants:

Mrs Helen Bulpitt: Senior Learning and Teaching Adviser, Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Health Sciences and Practice

Dr John Canning: Academic Coordinator, Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Language, Linguistics and Area Studies

Dr Phil Gravestock: Head of the Centre for Learning and Teaching, University of Gloucestershire

Dr Yolande Knight: Resource Co-ordinator, Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences (GEES)

Ms Lynette Matthews: Staff and Educational Development Assistant, University of Leicester.

For more information about the award please contact the programme leader: Helen King (h.king@plymouth.ac.uk).

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Review of Higher Education Academy research and evaluation activities: three core areas of work

Dr Andria Hanbury and **Dr Mike Prosser,** Higher Education Academy

Introduction

Research and evaluation is an integral activity of the Higher Education Academy, providing an evidence base for other Academy and sector-wide activities. These research activities enhance understanding of the student learning experience, contribute towards the Academy's mission of helping all institutions provide the best possible learning experience for their students, and can be helpful to institutions in their quality enhancement activities. Research at the Academy can be categorised into three different areas of work, and these form the basis of this article. The first is the funding and commissioning of research activities, covering research projects, literature reviews and surveys. The second area is the development and support of research and evaluation activity, including working with institutions to actively engage with the National Student Survey (NSS), and the Academy's formative evaluation of accredited teaching development programmes. The third area of work is related more to the organisation and coordination of research activities, with a programme of work underway to review and develop our systems for funding and commissioning research, including the establishment of a peer review college for funded research. The details of these three areas of work are discussed in more detail below.

Area one: funding and commissioning of research

The Academy is now in its third round of funding one year research projects and literature reviews, having started this process in 2005–2006. To date a total of 28 research projects and nine literature reviews have been funded over the period 2005–2007, with a further four research projects planned for the period 2007–2008. A list of themes for the projects and literature reviews are developed through consultation with the sector, covering areas of strategic importance for the sector. Themes include 'Effects of fee regimes on students' service expectations' which was from the first round of research projects in 2005–2006 and 'Undergraduate student experience of blended learning approaches' which was from the second round of literature

reviews in 2006–2007. Of paramount importance is the dissemination of findings from these funded projects to the sector. The findings from the first round of research projects are currently being disseminated on the Academy's website, comprising an abstract, executive summary and full report, with some of the projects also reported in the media. In addition to dissemination on the Academy website, executive summaries from the first round of literature reviews were also published in an Academy report 'Academy Literature Reviews: 2005–2006'. As part of our review and development of our systems for funding and commissioning research, in future it is planned that executive summaries of all research activities will be disseminated together in a biannual Academy report, including the research projects and surveys.

In addition to funding research, we also commission work. Two examples of commissioned work are in the area of surveys. The first phase of The First Year Experience Survey was commissioned to Professor Mantz Yorke of Lancaster University and Professor Bernard Longden of Liverpool Hope University with a second phase underway, and the Taught Masters Programmes Survey is commissioned to York Consulting Limited. These two surveys were commissioned because of the dearth of research in these two areas and the practical utility of the findings for institutions and the sector as a whole. For example, the first phase of The First Year Experience Survey, which was carried out in 2006, identified factors which influence student retention, with financial worries and lack of good information about the institution and/or programme entered found to be particularly pertinent. Similarly, it is anticipated that findings from the Taught Masters Programmes Survey will provide valuable information for institutions to help them enhance their provision of taught masters programmes.

Area two: development and support of research

We are running a programme of activities relating to the NSS, helping institutions to engage with and use this resource to enhance the learning experience of their students. One of these activities is the establishment of a working group of representatives from approximately twelve institutions who meet to discuss and share ideas for effectively using the NSS for quality enhancement purposes. Outcomes arising from this working group will be disseminated across the sector, with other examples of good practice and opportunities for discussion provided at the second annual NSS Conference in June 2007. The Academy also conducted a Formative Evaluation of Accredited Programmes (Prosser, Rickinson, Bence, Hanbury and Kulej, 2006) to review the effectiveness of these programmes and identify areas for development and improvement of them. The evaluation found that academics rated themselves as being more student-centred in their approach to teaching after attending a programme, with student-centred teaching found in previous research to be associated with students adopting a deeper approach to learning (e.g. Trigwell *et al.*, 1998; Trigwell *et al.*, 1999), and deeper approaches to learning found to be associated with better student learning outcomes (e.g. Marton and Saljo, 1976, and Prosser and Millar, 1989). Areas for the development and improvement

of the programmes were found to be the workload which was perceived to be too heavy, and the balance of generic-versus discipline-specific support on them. A copy of the report is available on our website and the results are also being presented at the Developing Potentials for Learning Conference by the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction in September this year.

Finally, we have worked with institutions and other national organisations, including the Quality Assurance Agency and UKGRAD, to develop a Postgraduate Research Experience Survey. This well-researched and piloted survey is designed to explore postgraduate research degree students' experience of their programmes and is offered as a service to institutions, which they can choose to take part in. As with the Taught Masters Programmes Survey, it is anticipated that the findings will be of great value to institutions in their quality enhancement efforts, and will provide information regarding research degree programmes at a national level. The processes and structures associated with this survey have been designed to safeguard against league tables being developed from the results, focusing attention on using the results to make evidence-based changes instead. The first administration of this survey began in March 2006.

Area three: reviewing and developing systems

One of the main activities in this area is our work towards developing a Peer Review College comprising independent external reviewers with expertise in different subject disciplines and thematic areas. Given the volume of funded research projects, literature reviews and commissioned work, it is timely for us to establish this College to ensure research is commissioned, managed and disseminated as effectively as possible. In addition to the Review College, a programme of work is also under way to develop a framework and set of procedures for the identification of key topics and issues for future funding and approaches to dissemination, amongst other activities.

Conclusion

Our overall aim is to raise the profile of using evidence-based approaches to enhance the student learning experience. The Academy has generated and contributed to a considerable amount of research activity, with more planned for the future. The Academy is responsible for both funding and commissioning, and developing and supporting research. We strive to fulfil these duties in a way that will be informative at a theoretical level, whilst also of practical use to the sector, deepening understanding around strategically important issues in higher education. Please refer to the Research and Evaluation pages on the Academy website (**http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/Research.htm**) for further information regarding any of the cited research, and for future funding opportunities.

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Using an MP3 recorder to give feedback on student assignments

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Are lecturers looking for a way of giving students good-quality feedback on their work, whilst saving time? Of course they are!

Feedback can powerfully influence student learning. Indeed, as Ramsden (2003: 187) says, 'It is impossible to overstate the importance of effective comments on students' progress.' Feedback is best (Brown, 2001) if it:

- is timely
- is perceived as relevant
- is meaningful
- suggests ways of improvement which are within the student's grasp.

Unfortunately, feedback is one of the aspects of higher education with which students are least satisfied (HEFCE, 2005). A difficulty is that with rising student numbers and deteriorating staff:student ratios it is increasingly difficult to provide high-quality feedback to students on the work that they do. Those assessing students are under pressure to find and use techniques which are both efficient and effective. Various methods have been suggested, e.g. (Race, 2006) statement banks; whole-group feedback; assignment return sheets; model answers; posting comments of common errors and difficulties to an electronic discussion board. Another idea, advanced by Rust (2001), is to use audiotape to give feedback. Here he explains its advantages:

'While reducing the time you spend, this may actually increase rather than reduce the amount of feedback given…Students frequently say that they get far more information from taped comments, including the tone of one's voice, than they do from written comments, and they also do not have to try to cope with some of our illegible writing.'
(Rust, 2001: 22)

However, lecturers seem not to have widely taken up Rust's suggestion. Why not? I speculate that there will be several reasons, amongst them:

- organising students to supply an audio cassette along with their assignments
- reluctance to deal with an even larger pile of material (e.g. 100 essays for marking, plus 100 cassettes)
- keeping track of everything
- not having a cassette recorder handy, when and where they do the marking
- learning how to use the recorder and gain the skills necessary to give fluent, worthwhile feedback
- ensuring that everything is returned to the appropriate people.

That's a pretty substantial list, enough to deter many. However, as time goes by, another reason not to follow Rust's advice is looming larger: audio-cassette technology is becoming obsolete. Cassette recorders and players – analogue devices – are disappearing. Everything and everyone is going digital. Sound (e.g. music, speech) is increasingly recorded and processed on computers, and distributed via CD, MP3 file or podcast.

Could a typical lecturer use digital technology to follow Rust's advice – give audio feedback to students? I believe so, with an MP3 recorder.

There are many formats for digital sound files, but most have drawbacks. For example, WAV files tend to be very large and AAC files may be restricted to Sony products. However, these days, a high – and rising – proportion of students have MP3 players and the MP3 format is becoming the *de facto* standard which any digital media device can access. MP3 players – including the popular and fashionable iPod – are becoming steadily cheaper and students are increasingly to be seen wired up and listening to music on the bus or in the street. Maybe assignment markers could put their feedback into an MP3 file, so students could listen to it whenever and wherever they want, as many times as they want.

I've been experimenting with the creation of MP3 files for various purposes. First, it was to enable me to read stories to my (distant) grandchildren. But then I played around with producing four or five minutes' worth of oral commentary on some assignments from students on a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE), a programme for

new lecturers. For the early attempts, I downloaded and installed on my home PC some free audio recording and editing software, 'Audacity' [**http://audacity.sourceforge.net**/]. It was a little fiddly to set up, requiring the 'LAME' encoder plug-in. Then it was a multi-step process to produce an MP3 file (record, edit, convert to MP3 format). It was also less than flexible in use; I found myself needing to wear a headset to input the sound and monitor the output as I edited it. I was able to produce five minutes or so of commentary on PGCHE assignments – which the students much appreciated – but it wasn't saving me any time, even when I had become used to the software and the novel (for me) business of recording my voice for an official purpose. Clearly, this was not a technique I could recommend to the great majority of my colleagues who were neither as technically-minded as me, nor as determined to persist till the time savings were achieved.

I realised it would be better – and more likely to be adopted by others – if I could use a hand-held device, something like a Dictaphone, to produce MP3 files, which I could then upload to a computer via USB connection and forward to students via email or their personal space in a virtual learning environment (VLE). The problem has been that until shortly before the time of writing (late 2006) most such devices could not output in MP3 format. Intermediate steps have been necessary (e.g. upload to computer and convert to MP3 via some utility). Of course any such complications deter some potential users and reduce the time savings.

However, small MP3 recorders with USB connections are now beginning to appear. I have tried two to date, differing in build quality and convenience. With the better one, it truly is a simple matter to:

- record – directly as an MP3 file – a few minutes of feedback on a student assignment
- plug the recorder into a USB port on a PC
- upload the file
- rename it (to include the student's name or ID, for easy reference)

- send it to the student.

This is technology which most lecturers could soon use. After a short period of learning, they would be saving time and providing a better service. Would they also be pleasing their students? Probably, if the following quotes from PGCHE students are anything to go by.

Student comments

'I really liked this method of feedback. It makes it much more personal … and shows that you actually spent time looking at my work in detail. Students appreciate that.'

'I rather liked having you talk me through the feedback like this. It's nicer than face-to-face somehow, as I always feel I have to react and talk when I'm face-to-face, so I found I concentrated on the comments better.'

'I don't think I read all my feedback from the previous assignment, but I did listen to all of your audio file, twice – possibly just because it is a novelty, but I don't think so. It does not take too long at all to listen to, and I think it is nice to hear positive things said about your work and also easier to take criticism that way. There is also never the problem of illegibility!'

'It was very useful to be taken through [my feedback] slowly and carefully. I am sure I have taken in more this way. Also, the personal touch is always welcome and it is almost as good as a face-to-face feedback meeting. In fact, if I had received a low mark I think I would have preferred this method to a face-to-face meeting as it would 'save face' whilst still getting personalised feedback. … I suppose even if the feedback was more complex than [it was,] it would have the advantage of being repeatable, so that I could replay it until I understood.'

'One problem associated with feedback is that … not many students really seem to read and consider it as a learning opportunity. … Your experimental delivery method may encourage students to really listen and consequently use feedback in a constructive way. … I did like the fact that you commented page after page

rather than addressing a list of summary points, thus enabling the listener to follow your comments by looking at the assignment.'

'A comment delivered in words may be quicker to prepare than a written comment and much more can be said. So bearing this in mind, it may become a favourite method among lots of staff.'

'I thought it was great! I am currently beneath a pile of marking myself and there are often times when I would like to deliver more feedback than I have time to write, particularly with final-year dissertations. It also strikes me as an ideal feedback mechanism for the impending implementation of distance learning on our … masters programme. … With widespread acceptance of the MP3 compressed format … and 'podcasts', I think it could be very useful.'

Saving time

Will assessors really save time if they simply give feedback via an MP3 recorder? Almost certainly, once they have learned to use it and had a bit of practice at recording comments. How long will it take to become familiar with the recorder? Probably less than an hour, even if one is – as many profess – 'not very good with technology'. How many assignments will one need to give oral comments on before being comfortable with structuring and recording them? That's a personal thing, dependent on many variables, including self-consciousness about one's own voice, degree of perfectionism, *etc*. But it shouldn't take long. I improved a lot while doing the first four or five, and felt quite relaxed and confident after a dozen. We shouldn't worry about minor mistakes or imperfections – students understand that the recording isn't produced by the BBC (so are pretty forgiving) and anyway we can instantly correct 'mis-speaks' or lack of clarity, as we do in everyday conversation.

How much time will be saved? Obviously, that depends on how much feedback one gives. My usual style has been to put remarks in the margins of the assignments and to supplement these with word-processed comments. Using an MP3 recorder, I still want to

give written marginal comments, but substitute a sound file for my word-processed feedback. Hence, for me, the scope for economy is almost entirely confined to the time I spend on word processing and printing. Relative fluency in both media matters too: I can speak without much hesitation, but tend to write quite slowly. It may be different for others. And then there is the quality of the assignment: I'm probably not the only marker tending to provide more feedback on a poor assignment than on a good one. So how does this all add up? At present I can give only a personal answer. My first twenty MP3 files varied in length between four and nine minutes, with the more detailed commentary being on those at the lower end of the mark range. Typically, though, I was soon able to record five minutes of detailed feedback within ten minutes. Replaying took another five minutes or so. All this was significantly faster than word-processing the page of A4 which was the norm on the PGCHE programme.

Accountability

In marking student assignments, as with much else in education these days, we have to keep good records. This is so we can provide *evidence* of student performance, *demonstrate* what has occurred and, perhaps, let students have a duplicate of our feedback if the original goes astray. A common assumption – of managers, subject reviewers and external examiners – is that these records should be in hard-copy (*i.e.* paper) form. But is this really necessary? Could some records simply be digital? In particular, might an MP3 file of assignment feedback satisfy everyone?

Here is an anecdote which gives grounds for optimism. The external examiner on the programme where I experimented with giving feedback via MP3 files was no technophile. Like many academics, she was familiar with basic ICT applications such as email, word processing and the web. On the other hand, she had no media player on her PC and had never, knowingly, heard an MP3 file (music or otherwise). However, when I explained my experiment, she equipped her PC and agreed to

receive a sample of my MP3 files by email, along with the (hard-copy, sorry!) student assignments. We had an interesting correspondence about the experiment. She made some complimentary remarks about it and was satisfied with receiving my feedback on the students' work only as MP3 files and not on paper. Technology aside, an additional moral of the story is to create a dialogue with external examiners. It may pave the way for changing policy and practice.

Sound quality

MP3 files are *compressed*, typically to a tenth or less of the size of a CD file. Being compressed, they are quicker and – with the pricing policies of telecoms companies – often cheaper to move around than their uncompressed equivalents. There is a trade-off between file size and quality, though. The greater the compression, the lower the quality. So I suggest some testing, to find out what will satisfy the particular lecturer and students.

That said, experience from the music and radio industries suggests that most listeners are not much bothered about sound quality as long as they can follow what is going on. 'CD quality', 128 Kbps, (about 1MB per minute) will probably be overkill for assignment feedback; 32Kbps (roughly 1MB per four minutes and usually better than phone quality) is likely to be adequate.

Buying an MP3 recorder

This might be a problem, but one which lessens with time. In mid-2006 it was neither easy nor cheap to buy a hand-held MP3 recorder, especially one with a USB socket for uploading the recordings. After extensive searching, I found only three, priced at £135, £300 and £600+. The £135 device proved not to be good enough: it was too small to use comfortably, build quality was poor and it developed a fault after about three months. In contrast, the £300 device has been fine – well-built, comfortable in the hand, easy to use, and producing recordings of superb quality (even the lowest setting is very good). I won't name any of the recorders because they will, no doubt, soon be

superseded by cheaper, more capable and more widely-available models. With the rise of podcasting (podcasts are in MP3 format), by the time this is published, there is likely to be greater choice, at more affordable prices. A department may be able to justify buying one or more, perhaps for shared use.

So is it worth using an MP3 recorder?

Earlier, I came up with several reasons why Rust's (2001) suggestion of giving assignment feedback on an audio cassette had not been widely adopted. Some of the barriers remain even when using a good MP3 recorder, e.g. learning to use the device; becoming fluent while speaking into it; ensuring people receive their own feedback and not someone else's. Also, as with cassette recorders, there may not always be one to hand when marking. However, other objections will have evaporated or diminished if an MP3 recorder can be obtained – there is no need for students to provide a cassette along with their assignment and there are fewer physical objects to keep track of or be intimidating in the marking pile. So whilst the process is not entirely problem-free, there are probably fewer reasons nowadays *not* to provide feedback via an audio recording.

On the positive side of the balance sheet, my students very much liked getting an MP3 file from me containing a few minutes of feedback on their assignments. They appreciated the personal touch, without it being, perhaps, uncomfortably, face-to-face. Withholding the mark till near the end made them listen to my comments, rather than skimming or skipping what I was saying. They valued being able to replay my words until they understood the point I was making. They noticed that I probably said more than I would have written. There was no problem with illegible handwriting. And – perhaps the clincher – it was soon saving me time.

True, my audio-recordings didn't have to be in MP3 format to obtain these benefits. However, MP3 files are very widely accessible these days, probably

more so than any other sound format. In addition, they are smaller, minute-for-minute, than most file types, making them quicker and cheaper to send and receive.

Assessors could use free software to create MP3 files with their comments on students' work, but it's currently rather fiddly and one may need to wear a headset and be wired to a computer to do things this way.

Much simpler and more convenient is to create MP3 files directly with a hand-held MP3 recorder which has a USB socket for uploading. These gadgets aren't cheap but should become more affordable. Even at 2006 prices, it would be worth most university departments buying one or two for shared, experimental, use.

Lecturers could then record their feedback wherever they like, except on a crowded train, I hope!

And if the purse-holders need more persuasion, we could tell them we're planning to use the MP3 recorder to start podcasting.

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There is a pretty extensive literature and a lot of empirical evidence that the 'traditional' notion of the academic role is, to say the least, under some stress, that the 'ideal' of teaching, research and administration or service is coming apart in many places – an international trend. We might consider whether an exclusive concern with teaching and learning actually contributes to that separation and whether it simply looks out of date in a world that has grown too complex for the simple certainties of the 1980s.

We are indeed living through major changes – and they are a challenge to the ways we organised ourselves for development back in the 1980s. Separating teaching and research looks outmoded and artificial. Real world engagement prompts us to review our previous certainties about knowledge and about our role in relation to it. In the face of these major changes, the debate over whether new staff should have to do a Postgraduate Certificate in teaching seems just a little backward-looking and unimaginative.

The ED/SD divide

There is a startlingly obvious disjunction between educational development and staff development. Educational development units tend to be completely separate from HR-based staff development although this is often not so marked in old universities. Now we could have an interesting time analysing why this is so; it's partly about beliefs and values and partly also about power and positioning. For the educational developer there may be benefits but there are also costs in the separation.

Firstly, we risk cutting ourselves off from some of the aspects of an institution that most influence behaviour – induction, probation, review, reward and promotion. CETL colleagues at my own institution have been asking themselves how they can get people with no discretionary time to engage with them. Part of the answer is in the management of incentives but educational developers don't have access to those structures and processes.

Secondly, we vacate areas where we can be of value. In the last five years government got serious about leadership and management development. The work has gone to Human Resources. It got semi-serious about research and third stream activity. In the main, this has gone to HR. So at the moment, it is the Personnel department, in its new guise as Human Resources in many institutions, which is looking across all of the work that goes on in universities and all those who work in universities.

I don't want to make cheap criticisms of HR people – as a head of department I rely heavily on some excellent HR advice about contracts and performance review. But these are of course HR matters. The problem with not engaging with the whole academic role is that the HR community is not, on the whole, knowledgeable enough about universities and what they are and what they do – virtually no-one who works in HR has worked in an academic department, taught a student, published a paper or gained a research grant or contract. And, in a sense, why should they? The weakness of this situation only becomes apparent when HR leads on issues that really require detailed knowledge of some of the issues above and of the scholarship base that underlies them.

So, by not engaging with these issues, educational developers risk leaving the nature of support for academic work to HR. Note that these areas that are now colonised by HR are the other component parts of academic identity. The educational development community works with but one part of the whole.

Thirdly, we leave it to the 'poor bloody infantry' to pull it all together. If we don't work effectively with others who do development work, it will be up to the main grade academic to make it all make sense, which doesn't seem entirely fair.

I should say in passing, by the way, that we should not assume that it is entirely up to people called developers – of whatever persuasion – to come galloping to the aid of academic staff. Disciplinary and professional communities and associations have a vital role to play, but are not my focus here.

The intellectual compartment

Educational developers are thoughtful and inventive and there is now a large and useful literature around issues in student learning and educational development. However, I think there are some missed connections.

Am I the only person to notice a certain circularity in educational development? X cites Y who cites Z who cites X. This may be a sign of a maturing field, generating a high level of agreement around shared paradigms. Or it may indicate an inward-looking culture.

On the whole, the HE pedagogic literature seems less rich and varied than that which is used for pre-16 education. This is not surprising. It is a much younger field of study. One very specific point – at the moment we remain in thrall to an orthodoxy around deep and surface learning that certainly has immense value but needs to be accompanied by more sophisticated psychological and sociological explanations of teaching and learning.

The increasing emphasis on 'the student learning experience' – that valuable but dangerous mantra – pulls us away from 'the staff academic experience' which I believe should concern us just as much. There is a rich literature about professional learning and we do not use it enough, either in reflecting on our own learning or on those of our academic colleagues or on students in higher education. Again, the literature around academic identity could be used more.

Literatures on organisational development and on knowledge management are also not very widely accessed by those working in educational development.

Losing touch with the academy

For me there are two risks here. The first is that, by being concerned solely with teaching, we risk presenting ourselves as being uninterested in, or unsympathetic to, some major aspects of academic work and identity and may thus lose credibility and perceived relevance among academic staff. We need to take note of what people call themselves – in many universities the word 'teacher' is not used – nor even 'academic'. People are far more likely to describe themselves by discipline – as physicists or historians. This tells us a lot about their self-perception. In passing, I should note that exclusive concentration on teaching does not play at all well in old universities, nor, increasingly, in a number of new universities and this may be the biggest single reason that SEDA has made less headway in pre-92 institutions.

I'd also, in passing, note another separation. Just as a lot of HR-based development is not rooted in the academy, neither, I fear, is a lot of educational development work. There is a grave danger that we float off and talk to ourselves. We have a wonderful language to entertain ourselves with – facilitation, dissemination, implementation, community of practice, cognitive gains and, holy of holies, the student learning experience. It's worth remembering that subject centres are praised by mainstream academics and well worth asking why.

So when we talk about making connections among development tribes and territories, we need to remember that it is possible to connect development up and yet have it unhelpfully separate from those actually doing the academic work in the University.

Some terms for consideration

So far I've been taking things to pieces. May I now offer something that might help to build things up. Let me put a model in front of you. Let's for a moment clear from our minds the various tribes and territories that exist and instead go back to the start of this keynote when I mentioned greenfield development. I'd like to say something about what it would be good to have, as an approach to development of all kinds in universities.

I offer you the proposition that development should have four aspects. It should be:

Inclusive – recognising that all who work in universities contribute to what universities do. Almost all achievement is team achievement

Strategic – whilst not swallowing entirely the hyper-rationalism of institutional mission and strategic alignment, I suggest that in making decisions about the kind of development we have, we need to pay attention to what the institution is trying to achieve and to put the resource where it is likely to do most good

Integrated – here means treating academic work as a number of inter-related activities; teaching, researching, consulting, leading, managing, service, outreach, all requiring broad capabilities and an ethical approach

Scholarly – perhaps this does not require definition here but for me it would include having a highly developed understanding of the context of a university and of the wider world.

I want to put up for discussion the idea that the development that happens in a university should, collectively, be this. Let's go back to our two communities and see how they measure up.

HR-based staff development tends to be: inclusive, in that it deals with all staff; strategic, for HR strategies are usually tied in very much to an institution's strategic plan; and integrated, because such mechanisms as performance review tend to deal with the whole of a person's activities. However, I would argue they are often not sufficiently contextualised and not sufficiently scholarly.

Setting up online collaborative learning groups using *Wiki* technology – a tutors' guide

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Introduction

Many of you may recall when the Internet first appeared in our institutions. What were your first thoughts? This could be useful for research and/or teaching, or it just has novelty value? We have moved on a long way since the early 90s in terms of how the Internet has impacted on research, teaching and student learning. How many of us feel swept away by the pace of technological developments and that it is our students who are leading the way – can we ever catch up, or should we try? We have all probably heard of Blogs, Wikis and Podcasting, but do we really know how appropriate they are for teaching our own discipline and improving the student learning experience?

This article is not intended to demystify or explain all of the different technologies available to you in your teaching, nor does it attempt to provide technical information. This article is aimed at HE tutors who would like to set up online collaborative learning groups for their students using Wiki technology, and assumes either you have access to Wiki technology in your institution, or you know someone who can set this up for you, e.g. a learning technologist from your educational development unit. You do not need to know everything about this technology, nor how it is different from other technologies – for definitions, have a look at Wikipedia (**http://www.wikipedia.com**) which is a well-known online free encyclopedia using Wiki technology and allows anyone to create, edit or add to an existing entry, unlike a Blog. (A Blog is an online journal that allows the owner to post entries that are generally displayed in reverse chronological order. Many Blogs allow readers to comment on these posts. A Wiki is a type of website that allows multiple users collaboratively to create and edit pages.) A Wiki looks similar to an Internet page; however, unlike a static Internet page where an individual learner can only seek and retrieve read-only information, a Wiki provides the facility to develop content and exchange knowledge online through multiple collaborative writings.

This guide outlines how a Wiki can be used as part of social constructivist pedagogical practice to guide learners to undertake learner group work in the context of learning groups, thus empowering learners to develop team working, collaboration and problem-solving skills whilst taking ownership of their own learning and learning environment. The approach adopted is to 'blend' face-to-face and online student learning experiences, ensuring students feel fully supported, motivated and engaged in their own learning. Face-to-face tutor/student contact (lectures/seminars) prior to using online learning tools is a critical success factor and ensures students are adequately prepared. The tutor can then decide on the level of online support to provide to their students, *i.e.* how much to intervene and/or facilitate.

This guide is based on practice and lessons learned at the University of Hertfordshire and is aimed at helping other tutors to create online collaborative learning environments. For example, the completion of a set of individual tasks and group tasks by one cohort of the author's 96 second year undergraduate computing students resulted in 35,599 hits (page loads) to the Wiki during the duration of the tasks with 66,122 hits over the life of the module.

Setting up the learning environment

The tutor's role is front-loaded, providing detailed instructions, learning activities, templates, resources and materials for learning. Tutor time is needed for the up-front design and development of the online learning environment, and for the tutor to become familiar with the Wiki tools. The class-based sessions are used to introduce the online learning environment and associated tasks to the students. As tutor, you will also need to set aside time to put the students in groups and to ensure they have time to become familiar with the Wiki tools, before they complete the tasks. This then allows you as tutor to 'step back', which at first sight might seem risky, but the risks are reduced by ensuring the learning environment is carefully prepared, is robust in terms of the technology, and that your students feel adequately prepared.

Set up the Wiki

If you can use Microsoft Word you can use Wiki. There are many Wiki tools emerging and all have similar features (this guide is based on the author's experience of Jotspot[c]). Most Wiki tools allow the creation of pages using the standard formatting tool in Word. Once this environment is set up by the tutor, together with the development of clear instructions for learners as to what is expected of them, your learners can then take it from there.

First stage: all of the planning documents and communications to learners can be delivered by the Wiki, thus providing permanent access for reference as they complete their tasks. Provided permissions are granted, everyone can make changes to the Wiki. For example, the tutor creates different groups of students and grants permissions for individual learners to access only their respective group, with the tutor having access to all groups. Communal areas can be created, allowing the creation, adding to, editing and sharing of findings, resources, news, notices, discussions *etc.*, e.g. areas can be created to discuss problems with the technology. All the documentation and instructions provided by the tutor can be annotated by the learners and edited in the Wiki, *i.e.* to suit their specific needs, thus encouraging teamwork. Therefore, the Wiki provides an efficient and effective way of organising and sharing the group's efforts allowing them to keep track of where everyone is in the process. Wiki provides a facility to back-track, thus ensuring version control; this is a very useful feature for the tutor, enabling

the monitoring of progressive knowledge building, or intervention when necessary – perhaps putting an individual or group of learners back on the right track.

Second stage: the Wiki can now be populated with the learning activities/ tasks, all learning materials, templates and resources required for learning. These can be located in a communal area and learners can add these to their group areas simply by creating a link, adding annotations and other content as they progress through the tasks. This provides a very useful learning resource and feedback for the tutor to use in the design of subsequent online learning environments for other student cohorts.

Course Design – group activities/tasks

The set learning activities/tasks will reflect the nature of the discipline, but should initiate learner curiosity, set the learners on the path to discovery and empower and enable them to take ownership of their own learning. This is achieved by designing activities and tasks that actively engage and motivate the learners and specifically encourage learners to share knowledge, help each other and encourage the development of a support network, whilst actively encouraging the learners to create their own learning environment.

The tutor's role is initially to create the seeds for this learning environment and as a foundation for it to grow, hence the importance of careful up-front planning and design. Some suggested broad activities used by the author are detailed below:

• To foster ownership of the learning and learning environment, and through the activities/tasks, learners should be encouraged to reflect on and document progression of their own learning, and initially to communicate their own expectations of the group work in the Wiki. This can be achieved through completion of a 'group commitment' form which they submit soon after group formation so they are clear about what is required of them. This form can include ground rules for the group *i.e.* when, how and where meetings will take place, Wiki engagement protocols, e.g. not to use text language, only full sentences

• Through the activities/tasks tutors can fully exploit the pedagogic advantages of Wiki technology. For example, an early task to encourage learners fully to engage with the collaborative approach could be to find an article, summarise it and share this with group members online in the communal area on the Wiki

• Ask the learners to role-play a series of interviews with group members. Provide the learners with a list of roles to choose from, and ask them to swap roles. You can get groups to role-play with each other and swap around. All these activities take place online using the Wiki. Bear in mind that Wiki technology is asynchronous and responses are delayed; this has the added benefit of providing learners with an opportunity to reflect before writing a response

• Learners can share text, articles, documents, images, photos, diagrams, stories, voice recordings (Podcasts) and video in the Wiki; thus the design of the course, associated activities/tasks and assessment can reflect this facility

• Having had experience of a learning activity, encourage learners to reflect on the learning process, e.g. by creating their own individual or group reflective page in the Wiki.

Preparing the learners

Introductory face-to-face sessions: to ensure learners are adequately briefed and understand the requirements of the learning activities/tasks, the lecture room is the most appropriate method for introducing the online Wiki environment, *i.e.* through a live demonstration. In this way, feedback from students can be used to address any potential problems.

Following on from the introductory lecture, a tutorial/seminar will take learners onto the next preparatory stage, moving them from a familiar face-to-face tutorial situation and leading them into an online collaborative environment through a simulated interactive exercise. This involves providing the students with a group-based problem to solve, using a large piece of white paper to replicate an online Wiki page, some post-it notes, a pen and instructions not to talk as they complete the task, thus simulating an online asynchronous environment. Learners can simply

write on the post-it notes and attach these on the white paper, thus simulating contributing to the Wiki. These contributions are the way that your students can engage with each other, discuss the task and agree how to complete it, thus solving the problem set by the tutor. After this face-to-face simulation, encourage the students to talk and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of working online in comparison to completing a face-to-face classroom based task. This helps students to contextualise and plan how they will engage with the online Wiki environment.

It is also important to emphasise the need for teamworking and to see this as an important life skill. If appropriate, and relevant to their discipline, a short report from industry outlining employer skills expectations is a useful context to emphasise the importance of teamworking and problem-solving skills.

Online preparation: once learners feel adequately prepared, they can now be divided into online groups and start to engage with each other through the Wiki. Encourage learners to introduce themselves to each other and to familiarise themselves with the Wiki learning environment. Create a task that requires learners to submit details about themselves to the rest of their group through their specific Wiki area and within a short period of group formation. For example:

• Individual name and the names of other group members, e.g. I am Fred Bloggs and I am working with John Smith, Mary O' Reilly and Peter O' Connor; I am Peter O' Connor and I am working with Fred Bloggs, Mary O' Reilly and John Smith *etc.*

• Provide contact details and confirm that they have a list of group contact details (names, telephone numbers, email addresses)

• Provide a photo of an animal, object, movie star or whatever they feel represents them as an individual

• Write three sentences about themselves, e.g. say what they like, hobbies, favourite food and whatever they feel is appropriate to introduce themselves to the rest of the group.

Conclusion

These suggestions only represent a small number of the possible Wiki technology options open to a tutor for developing an online social

constructivist pedagogical practice student learning environment. Wikis can essentially be used for anything where collaboratively developed content is desirable and can make it easier for learners to share information. The technology is not difficult to use – if you can use Word you can use a Wiki.

In this article, and based on the author's own experiences, the suggested tutor's role is to invest heavily in the up-front planning and design of the student learning environment, and then to step back and adopt a facilitative role as their students complete set group activities/tasks. The key critical success factor is in constructing the design of the student learning experience which encourages active engagement and motivation amongst the learners, and specifically to encourage learners to share knowledge, help each other and develop a support network whilst actively encouraging them to create their own learning environment. Given the current didactic approach to teaching and learning, this may seem risky to many tutors. However, learners are now entering higher education already familiar with a whole host of technologies e.g. computers, the Internet, MySpace, Instant Messenger, mobile phones, and are already using these tools to communicate, socialise and network – they do not need convincing.

As tutors, our challenge is to help integrate these technologies into the formal and institutional student learning experience. The focus is not on the technology, but on the pedagogy, as the technology is merely a means to an end. This article has demonstrated that time needs to be set aside to develop and practise the skills required to set-up a Wiki for students. Anyone thinking of trying this with their students is encouraged initially to practise this in a 'safe' environment, possibly with colleagues, and to seek support from a learning technologist or someone familiar with the technical aspects. However, once you feel confident enough in using the technology and ready to introduce Wiki technology into your teaching, many of the principles outlined in this article are simply the transfer of good face-to-face practice into an online environment: careful planning and design of the student learning experience, adequately preparing students using feedback (an iterative process, face-to-face and online), setting appropriate assessed learning activities/tasks, encouraging discussion and collaboration and the sharing of knowledge.

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Educational development tends not to be inclusive, because it does not deal with all staff. It doesn't even deal with all staff whose work contributes to the quality of a student's learning experience. It is not integrated. It is becoming more strategic, is increasingly scholarly and is fairly aware of context, although slightly in denial about what many academic staff do for much of the time.

I suggest that these terms may be useful as a means of characterising how we and others approach things. This rough and ready analysis suggests that we may have something to learn from one another.

Some conclusions

Tribes and territories are part of the human condition – they won't go away. An advanced understanding of tribalism and territoriality is essential as we go about our work in universities. I remember recently saying much the same thing to a group of staff being inducted into higher education. I went on – a bit – about how to deal with and how not deal with academic staff and about the difference that disciplines make. A member of the group became rather cross with me. 'I don't want to hear about academics being different', he complained. 'I'm from HR and my job is to make everyone the same'. He was wrong – we are of course concerned with equity, but that's a different matter and we have to accept and indeed celebrate diversity in the university.

We also need to turn that awareness on ourselves because we too are part of a tribe and we have a territory. We can call it a community of practice and feel much warmer about the whole thing of course! Locations, boundaries and bridges (the title of the conference) are valuable metaphors – where we place ourselves, where our concerns start and end, and how we connect with others beyond – these need continuing attention as part of our professional self-awareness, in relation to both development and academic communities.

In the longer term there are questions that invite exploration nationally, where there is tribalism too. We have two national agencies: the HEA and the LF. One does teaching and the other does leading and managing. It doesn't take a major intellect to spot that there is a significant overlap – teaching needs leadership – yet two tribes were established by government. How helpful is this arrangement?

We can do some practical thinking now. At the level of the institution, are there ways, given existing structures, in which we can build bridges and make things work better?

For discussion

So, some questions I'd like to offer to you to open up discussion:

What tribes and territories are there in my own institution? How can they be characterised?
What are the advantages and disadvantages of the current arrangement?
How might things be improved?

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Supporting reflective processes – insights from a review of research for practitioners, and for SEDA

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Introduction

The notion of 'reflective practice', in broad terms the extended consideration of problematic aspects of practice, is widely employed across higher education. We see it drawn on within personal development planning, in professional disciplines, on programmes of initial professional development for new academic staff and elsewhere. Indeed, SEDA itself has played a role in promoting this notion through the inclusion of the value 'Continued reflection on professional practice' as an integral element of all professional development programmes that it recognises.

But can we say that approaches which draw on this notion are in any way effective? What does the research literature say about such a question? How should one go about practice in this area, whether one is running a course on learning and teaching or developing a curriculum for students? Indeed, how should SEDA's own stance towards reflective practice develop?

We seek here to highlight pertinent findings from a review of the research into the role and effectiveness of approaches to reflective practice within programmes for new members of academic staff. This review was funded by the Higher Education Academy and completed during 2006 (see Kahn et al., 2006 for the full review report). It involved a theoretical synthesis of some 69 research studies. While focusing primarily on programmes for new academic staff, it also took in studies on experienced academic staff, teacher education and other disciplines. The findings are thus of relevance beyond the immediate focus on programmes for new academic staff.

The methodology for the review was underpinned by a dialogue that incorporated three main elements, as explored in Kahn et al. (2007): an engagement between the practitioner reviewers themselves (who were all themselves leading programmes for new academic staff), ensuring space for reviewing, and common understanding and language; a conversation between theory and practice, allowing contributions from theory and research to be explicitly related to the current climate of practice; and a dialogue with other parties, ensuring the presence of an informed and yet supportive challenge through clearly specified roles.

Understanding directed reflective processes

Before summarising the conclusions of the review on the effectiveness of the reflective processes seen in the literature, however, it is helpful to develop our understanding of what is entailed in a reflective process and how it might be supported. Indeed, this was the main approach taken by the review, which employed an analytical process drawing on elements from grounded theory. Judgements on the effectiveness of reflective processes were then made in light of the conceptual understanding developed during the review.

In particular, we introduced the overarching notion of a 'directed reflective process', highlighting first of all the range of possible conceptions of reflection and the need to select from amongst these. Indeed it was clear that our above initial definition of reflective practice remains wide open, with a range of theorists introducing further terms, including Schön, van Manen, Mezirow, Hatton and Smith, and Moon. For instance,

van Manen distinguishes several forms of reflection, including critical reflection, which addresses such issues as the underlying ethics and the wider social environment. The term 'reflective process' is thus preferred to 'reflection' in order to highlight the need for specific courses or trains of reflective thinking with a given set of characteristics. The term 'directed' then highlights the way a process must both be targeted and supported. It is after all difficult to sustain a problematic focus over an extended period, especially when there are awkward implications for one's own practice.

Our central notion of a directed reflective process was then underpinned by a series of categories: theoretical underpinnings, core reflective process, social basis, personal basis, wider context and outcomes. Each of these categories had a range of subcategories (with key subcategories shaping the second column of the table below). One of these sub-categories, dialogue, emerged as a critical element, combining as it does both pedagogic and reflective considerations.

Core reflective process (task and focus):
Task – Students complete an extended task (e.g. keeping a reflective diary) or series of tasks (e.g. incorporating a cycle of activities or a progression in the level of challenge). Focus – The task is focused on specific areas (e.g. an aspect of professional practice, development in relation to a set of personal goals, or a form of disciplinary expertise); whether in relation to the area itself, its foundations, or the accompanying reflective process.

Social basis:
Dialogue plays a key role in sustaining a focus on problematic issues, with a role for the voicing of a range of views and experiences, modelling of good practice, challenges, prompts, questioning, crossing of boundaries, insights from literature, specialist language, technology and feedback.

Personal basis:
A reflective process is directly affected by the way in which a person engages in it, becoming inherently different as individual abilities, qualities and identities vary. Ownership, level of experience, personal and professional identity, and roles are all important factors in this.

Wider context:
The context in which the reflective process unfolds (of programme, workplace, discipline and institution) affects, for instance, the scope to introduce change or to engage in dialogue.

Intended outcomes:
Covering changes in practice or expertise, and ability to engage in reflective processes; at both personal and collective levels. Close alignment is required between the focus of the reflective process and the intended outcomes.

The elements of a directed reflective process (taken from Kahn, 2007)

Dialogue, for instance, can ensure that the process is not confined within narrow patterns of thought, but challenges the participant and allows for the insights that result in a process of the appropriate depth. And more generally we know that the ability to engage in a thought process stems from interaction with others: processes occur first between people and are only then internalised, as Vygotsky (1978) argues. The other categories identified in the review, however, all also serve to give the appropriate direction to this reflective process, whether the set task and its focus, the clarity of the intended outcomes and so on.

The review suggests that a concerted effort is required in order to direct a reflective process, as Bell (2001) also suggests. These categories, however, should not be viewed in isolation to each other. In particular, the core reflective process and all of the remaining categories must lead or point in the same direction if a targeted and sustained process of problematic deliberation is to result. One approach to ensuring this alignment is to base practice in relation to the categories on one or more theories, whether in relation to reflection, the profession, the discipline or pedagogy. Practitioners may find it helpful to employ the proforma from the review report (Kahn *et al.*, 2006, pp.110-11), to ensure that reflective processes which they support address these categories and the interactions between them.

Implications for SEDA and programmes that it recognises

What conclusions then were we able to draw in relation to the effectiveness of reflective processes applied within programmes for new academic staff? The review claimed that specific reflective processes applied to practice on programmes for new academic staff yielded changes in capacity for practice or for the ability to engage in specific categories of reflection on practice, to the extent that these could be claimed as learning outcomes for a programme.

Beyond this, specific interventions were seen to lead to changes in professional identity or the ability to engage in reflective processes of a greater depth, such as reflection on premises or critical reflection. However, the evidence for such outcomes was not usually seen across an entire cohort of participants. In considering the current climate of practice within the sector, the review further saw at least some programmes for new academic staff laying claim to further outcomes that might potentially stem from the ability to engage in specific forms of reflective practice: these included the ability to innovate, the willingness to take risks and a framework for career-long development. However, even carefully targeted programmes with quite detailed understanding of specific sets

of reflective processes found limited evidence for widespread attainment of such broader outcomes; even those in programmes longer than a typical programme for new academic staff.

Programmes with learning outcomes linked to reflective practice that are of a wider nature may thus leave themselves open to concerns over rhetoric for institutional or accreditation purposes. At the least, it will be important for such programmes to focus selectively on outcomes that are regarded as central, and to ensure that specific strategies are employed to effect these outcomes, taking in the categories developed within the review. We also need to remember that any conception of reflective practice at odds with the dominant technical approaches within society at large will provide a real challenge to participants, an issue Elliot (2005) highlights in relation to critical action research.

SEDA itself may wish to consider more closely in its own work how to promote a more nuanced approach to its own commitment to the value of continued reflection on professional practice. It will be important that our processes encourage good practice, and that our own courses embody it; whether in unpacking conceptions of reflective practice or ensuring that learning is directed towards the particular conceptions that are employed. For instance, in the recognition process within the Professional Development Framework, it will be important to consider how programmes actually interpret and develop 'continued reflection on professional practice'. Similarly, courses and awards run by SEDA itself will need to find ways to articulate their own understanding of reflective practice, whether in the guidance, processes to support learning or assessment criteria.

Conclusions

The review has opened up a range of insights into the use of reflective processes within higher education, and particularly on programmes for new academic staff. It is interesting also that the impact on the practice of those carrying out the review was closely

seen to depend on an active attempt being made to integrate understanding with practice, as well as on interactions with fellow reviewers. Further investigation on the part of the reader, perhaps in reading relevant sections of the main review report, one of the briefing notes or following up specific journal articles that are relevant to their context, would be helpful for impact to result on a professional level. And one lesson from the review is that this should be carried out in a constructive yet challenging dialogue with others.

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Six of the best: priorities for continuing professional development (CPD) of academics

Pat Gannon-Leary and **Mike McCarthy,** University of Northumbria

Introduction
This article reports on a small-scale study at Northumbria University to determine which development activities – formal and informal – staff had found most influential on their CPD. The formal involves such activities as attending workshops, formal training sessions and conferences, consulting experts, undertaking research, getting published, keeping a reflective journal and designing curriculum, teaching materials and teaching strategies. The informal involves reading, conversations with colleagues, receiving informal feedback from colleagues and students and networking.

It was hoped that, as a result of the study, we might identify, and further build upon, those formal events which most impacted on that development.
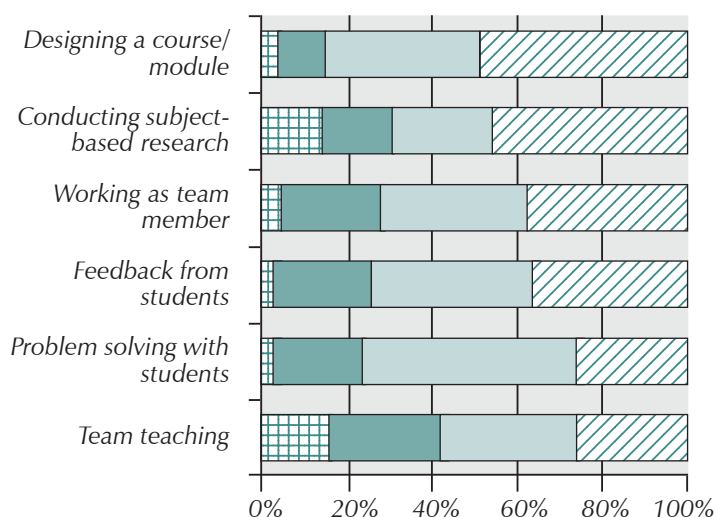
Methodology
Key statements pertaining to the development of knowledge and skills for teaching were incorporated into a short questionnaire, which was piloted prior to being emailed out to all academic staff at the home University. (Questionnaire design was influenced by the work of Norman Jackson who had run something similar at an HEA event.) In order to encourage responses, a prize draw was offered as an incentive to respondents and to staff prepared to be interviewed as a follow-up.

Results
A total of 125 questionnaires were received. Eight staff volunteered to be interviewed further. The survey was conducted at a time when lecturing staff at the University were involved in industrial action, and this may partly explain the somewhat disappointing response rate.

This article, as the title suggests, is concentrating on the six top ranked activities (see table on page 18), *i.e.* with the highest percentage of staff deeming them 'very important' to their CPD.

The six top ranked activities for CPD

Designing a course or module was the top ranked activity (47.6%) for contributing to staff's CPD. This finding is in contrast to that of Ferman (2002) which identified course design with peers and individual research as a minor theme in CPD.

Staff comments on course/module design included the following:

> 'Developing and teaching a post-graduate course overseas… helped me to reflect on and develop my teaching skills, which has helped me to identify strengths and weaknesses in my teaching practice…the most useful experience that I have ever had in terms of developing knowledge about the relationship between teaching and learning .'

Reid and Petocz (2003) explore an approach to CPD that focuses on developing and using research as a means of understanding the complexity of teaching and learning within specific discipline environments. Focusing on research development affords academics the opportunity to develop their teaching scholarship, prepare publishable work, and to develop teaching and learning practices aligned with their specific discipline environments. Certainly, in this survey, conducting subject-based research was the second highest ranked activity (44.2%) for contributing to CPD. This finding, while endorsing the arguments of Reid and Petocz and Harland and Staniforth (2000), is in contrast to that of Ferman (2002) which identified individual research as a minor theme in CPD.

One respondent in the survey equated the development of confidence with subject-based research:

> 'Good 'teaching' (or lecturing) comes from self confidence. This in turn comes from being confident in your subject knowledge and being highly qualified (to PhD standard).'

Ferman's study identified both networking and professional practice experience as minor themes in CPD. However, his study did identify 'discussions with peers' as distinct from

peer feedback as being a major theme. Working as a team member was ranked third (30.4%) by respondents in this survey and links in with the sixth-ranked development activity, team teaching (24.8%):

> 'Being part of a teaching team with experienced professionals was invaluable in the early years.'

Knight, Tait and Yorke (2006) contend that, while CPD is often characterised by 'event' delivery methods, non-formal learning is significant, complementing their argument with findings from a study of Open University academics. King's (2004) study of academics in Earth Sciences found that discussions with colleagues was the most frequently cited form of CPD undertaken (180/192 or 94%). As Haigh (2005) points out, because conversation is a constant in both professional and personal lives, it may not be afforded the value it deserves as a context for professional learning and development.

Certainly, while formal opportunities for CPD such as attending workshops and conferences are highlighted by researchers as important, these occasions cannot be organised at the drop of a hat (Power and Handa, 2005; Ming, 1999). However, engaging in informal discussions with colleagues can be equally profitable opportunities for CPD which can be arranged and used more often, especially when they involve colleagues working as part of a team or teaching the same programmes.

Boud (1999) argues that most staff development takes place in professional settings where academic staff spend most of their time. It takes the form of exchanges with colleagues – ranked third in this survey – and interacting with students, ranked fourth (28.8%) and fifth (25%). While none of these activities might be viewed as staff development, Boud believes they often have 'a more profound influence on staff than activities explicitly labelled as such.' (Boud, 1999, p.3)

Receiving and using feedback from students was rated by one respondent in the survey as being among her own personal top three:

> '[One of my top three professional development events would be] use of feedback (particularly from students) and module review.'

Power and Handa have identified not only student feedback but peer feedback, and peer teaching, as affording a rich opportunity for CPD. They point out that it is a relatively rare occurrence to spend intensive periods teaching/facilitating with their colleagues, and team teaching can address the issue of isolation in the profession by providing not only an opportunity for peer feedback, but also insights into peers' teaching strengths.

Team teaching was ranked sixth (24.8%) by respondents, three of whom specifically highlighted team teaching as one of their top CPD activities. Comments included the following:

'I have done team teaching in the past and have found this enormously beneficial…'

Encouraging staff to attend staff development events

It became apparent from the results of the survey that many of the development activities most valued by the staff were the sort of activities identified by Boud which were not conventionally classified as 'staff development'. Alarmingly a recent study by Davidovitch and Soen (2006) found that the more extensive an academic's participation in teaching workshops, the lower their score in the student assessments of their teaching performance! Davidovitch and Soen also found that academics with greater seniority received higher scores from their students in terms of their course structure and the organisation and clarity of their lectures and conclude that the best 'workshop' is professional experience.

If we are to offer formal staff development opportunities in the form of workshops, for example, what would most appeal to our academic staff?

When staff were asked about this, relevance was an important factor in influencing attendance at staff development sessions:

'A session that is highly focussed and short and sharp'

'Better focus on my actual teaching (Computer Science) rather than generic material that assumes I am teaching Humanities'

'Relevance to my area – both teaching and interest'.

Impact was another important factor which encouraged staff to attend the sessions:

'I need to be convinced the event will make a significant impact on my ability to do my job more effectively'

'Be clear what impact such sessions can have upon one's CPD, e.g. how such events might enhance one's CV'

'Should invoke critical thinking about my own practice and afford opportunities to gain insight into different ways of working'.

Concluding remarks

At a recent SEDA workshop held by the authors (Gannon-Leary and McCarthy, 2006), participants observed that there was no substitute for learning by experience.

Warhurst (2003) says:

' It is asserted that the provision of a formal teaching development programme…is of far less importance in enabling new lecturers' learning of teaching than learning derived from the experience of teaching, from social mediation in the work context, and from assuming the identity of higher education teacher, that is, from being situated in a knowing context.'

This 'situation in a knowing context' enables academic staff to develop themselves professionally in a number of ways

(Ferman and Page, 2000; King, 2004) both informal and formal. If workshops offered are shown to have relevance and impact that enable participants to assume the 'identity of a higher education teacher', there is a place for both.

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Book Review

The Transfer of Learning: Participants' Perspectives of Adult Education and Training

By Sarah Leberman, Lex McDonald and Stephanie Doyle

Ashgate (Gower), November 2006, 180 pages, hardcover, ISBN-10: 0566087340; ISBN-13: 978-0566087349.

I was quite excited both by the topic of this book and the phenomenological approach the authors take to the case studies. Transfer of learning has long been an important issue for everyone involved in education, but rapid developments in science and technology coupled with greater flexibility in employment patterns mean transfer is central to the principle of lifelong learning.

The authors predict the book will be useful for students, teachers, trainers and managers; I would concur and add that there is likely to be something of interest for readers of different backgrounds. *The Transfer of Learning*, as its subtitle suggests, focuses on adult learners. It draws on a broad evidence base, using case studies from a good variety of contexts – including management, in-service teacher development and business – to explore the learners' experience.

The book is divided into three sections, which the authors suggest may be read selectively, rather than in sequence. The book is clearly signposted, each chapter beginning with an outline of its content and concluding with a helpful summary, so facilitating more selective reading.

The first section explores the nature of transfer, providing theoretical background and highlighting some areas of conflict. The introductory chapter explores what is meant by transfer of learning and presents a conceptual model from Boud and Walker which is referred to throughout the book, though its application could be made more explicit. The second chapter provides a concise review of theoretical approaches to learning, presenting them in chronological order so the reader gets an idea of how theories have evolved. The approaches are also presented in a clear summary table, under the chapter sub-headings of Formal Disciplines, Behavioural, Cognitive, and Contextual Socio-cultural. The next chapter is devoted to the characteristics of adult learners and approaches to adult learning, including experiential and action learning, situated learning, collaborative learning and transformative learning, with consideration of different models of reflection. This chapter provides a comprehensive review of approaches to adult learning, again with useful comparison tables. All three chapters in this section are supported by extensive lists of references, though I found the listing of journal articles rather frustrating as the title of the article isn't given.

In the second section of the book each of the authors presents a research case study using a phenomenological perspective to explore the experiences of the adult learners. Sarah Leberman's study looks at Insurance Case Managers and her findings highlight the importance of student-centred course design and the role of personal development in enhancing professional skills. Lex MacDonald presents a three-phase research study of Teachers' Professional Development, which emphasises the contribution of cultural context to the outcomes of training and identifies social support as an important factor in bringing about changes in classroom practice. Stephanie Doyle's research looks at business students on a distance learning programme. She reports the students integrated their learning with their work and interactions with friends and colleagues facilitated this process. The third section reviews and reflects on the case studies.

Chapter 7 looks at factors promoting transfer of learning around the areas of learner characteristics, course design and work environment which are seen as crucial. The authors argue that Boud and Walker's model is effective because it incorporates all three aspects. Chapter 8 offers the three authors' reflections on the case studies drawing out the main conclusions for effective transfer of learning. The book concludes with the identification of areas where the authors feel further research is necessary.

It's a readable book covering a good range of material clearly and concisely, with the case studies providing an interesting and useful research dimension.

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Book Review

The Realities of Change provides twelve case studies of change management in Higher Education, along with an introductory chapter theorising change management in this sector. The case studies range from policy level change, such as the creation of the Carrick Institute in Australia, to alterations in the curriculum, including the introduction of a work-based degree at the University of Portsmouth. They concern change across a variety of institutions in different countries including the UK, Germany, the US and Australia. These apparently disparate studies all emphasise the importance of some key factors in effecting change, most notably the importance of a top-down, middle-out, bottom-up approach to change management that empowers all individuals in the change process.

However, while it is vital to ensure buy-in from all involved, this must be reinforced with reward and recognition, as Gavin Moodie emphasises in the title to his chapter 'No Money: No Change'.

The breadth of the case studies means that this volume will be of interest to a wide range of individuals involved in higher education. Each of the contributions is uniformly engaging, offering the reader practical insight into the dynamics of change management. Although the vast majority of chapters are written by change agents in the processes described, the collection does not present change in a naïve, idealistic manner. Throughout the volume, the difficulties of initiating change are regularly highlighted, a factor most evident in the two, seemingly contradictory, interpretations of an educational initiative introduced in Australia – a disparity that the editors would have done well to draw attention to. While Gavin Moodie's study of the Australian government's 'Crossroads' review demonstrates a marked scepticism about the potential of the Carrick Institute to effect change in attitudes towards teaching in Australia, where 'the Australian government's rewards for institutional performance overwhelmingly favour research' (23), in the following chapter Lesley H. Parker maintains that 'the sector remains positive about Carrick and its initiatives' (37). However, this discrepancy merely reinforces the overall thrust of the volume's approach to change. As Mark Atlay astutely asserts in his case study of an educational programme introduced at Luton University, change in an educational institution is 'inherently messy, uncertain and problematic' (128). He shows that by being receptive to criticism and addressing the issues raised by those wary of change, potential change initiatives can be strengthened immeasurably.

The only omission from *The Realities of Change* is a conclusion drawing out the general themes of the various case studies, though these issues become starkly obvious as one progresses through the text, and are briefly outlined in a two-page preface. Overall, this is an excellent book. It provides a valuable contribution to the field and will be of interest to all involved in effecting change at any level of higher education.

Geoff Baker is a Research Associate in the Centre for Integrative Learning at the University of Nottingham.

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technical (computing or IT) component has rapidly lost its currency.

Authors approached them with ideas and offers to write, they found contributors on their travels, and Sue's editorial red pen ensured the texts were straightforward, clear and helpful. They happily accepted the risk of patronising the experienced by writing to assist the novice. But no matter how hard they tried to make the texts user-friendly, a good academic can always subvert the assumptions. They have a tale of Graham being woken early one morning by an international phone call from a Norwegian lecturer urgently seeking advice. Graham's text had read: *'divide the class into groups of four'*. The lecturer was perplexed. He had 13 students. What should he do?

So where did the contents of the '53 Interesting Ways' come from? In an interview for the THES in July 2000, Pat Leon reported Sue saying:

> *'We asked: what does it look like from where the students are sitting? We took a political view of teaching: to redress the balance of power in the classroom and lecture theatre. We believe – and research in education supports this belief – that people, be they staff or students, learn best by participating, collaborating, reflecting and taking responsibility.'*

The drive behind the books is to shift from the passive model of 'being taught' to the active model of what the students themselves might do to learn and understand.

Today the talk in educational development is of research, scholarship and evaluation. PGCert course books are likely to be by Biggs, Ramsden, Prosser and Trigwell, Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall or Nicholls – texts which are either written by researchers in HE, or heavily dependent on their work. In HE, twists of language often reveal ambivalence – the use of '*pic'n'mix*' for modularity, '*spoon feeding*' for teaching or '*mickey mouse*' for new subjects, are all indicators of discomfort. The spirit behind the 53 Interesting Ways series has been to invite 'brilliantly creative and inventive' teachers to share what they do, through clearly-written and inexpensive publication. The offering of this helpful experience has sometimes been downgraded by the epithet *'hints and tips',* as if books of explicit advice, guidance, examples and case studies are part of an earlier, un-theorised world of apprenticeship which should be replaced by a new world of evidence-based practice.

There are four possible responses to this challenge. The first is that it has been a fortunate coincidence that much recent research supports what good teachers have been trying to do for so long. The second is that the success of the series suggests that a humanist, student-driven and socialist stance in higher education has been a very effective underpinning theory. The third is to recognise that many teachers develop new conceptual frameworks for their teaching as a result of having successfully experimented with what starts – for them – as a pragmatic suggestion. The fourth is to look closely at the texts themselves. As an example, consider the opening 'Powerful ideas in teaching' chapter of *Preparing to Teach*.

Where might these section titles come from, if not from some (by now) very familiar theoretical sources?

- Students construct knowledge
- Students need to see the whole picture
- Students are selectively negligent
- Students are driven by assessment
- Students often only memorise
- Students' attention is limited
- Students can be easily overburdened
- Adults learn differently
- Students learn well by doing
- Students learn well when they take responsibility for their learning
- Students have feelings.

Might the series have changed higher education in 53 interesting ways? There have certainly been some advances. The pedagogy of active learning has been the dominant culture in the formative years of the Subject Centres and lecturers now have many examples of how they can actively engage their students in the study of their own discipline. The professional preparation of teachers is established, the PGCerts are ubiquitous and their participants enjoy and benefit from working on them. We have a Professional Standards framework. Universities now employ a cadre of highly-skilled educational developers with an extensive repertoire of interventions to support staff and institutions. When the series started in 1984 there were just under 900,000 students in higher education, and in January this year, HESA reported there were 2,336,110 enrolments. And, as the Burgess Group reports, the proportion of good honours degrees awarded each year is rising – the reasons may be 'complex', but good teaching must be in there somewhere.

Yet there are some worrying features as well. Despite the effort of the enthusiasts, the arrival of IT has made possible using the PowerPoint lecture and VLEs like 'Blackboard' as new ways of dumping content onto the students. The National Student Survey shows dissatisfaction with feedback, one of the key elements in the tutoring relationship. The landscape of many departments has been transformed – where there were academics keen to deploy active learning in their sessions and grow their teaching expertise, they may now be keener to complete their research papers. Postgraduate teaching assistants have been invited into that space, but they are perforce inexperienced and partially trained – so are the students getting the tutoring and interaction that they need? And this is just the time they need it the most! While the pedagogy of information transmission might have been survivable by the hothouse flowers forced by the old A levels, the students of today and tomorrow need and deserve better and richer experiences.

After 20 years, Sue, Trevor, Graham and their various authors have given teachers in Higher Education at least 1101 Interesting Ways to improve their teaching. We should celebrate their achievement.

James Wisdom is an HE consultant specialising in educational development.

A full list of the '53 Interesting Ways' series is given on the facing page.

53 interesting ways to change higher education?

James Wisdom, HE Consultant

Based on a conversation between Sue and Trevor Habeshaw and James Wisdom

Just before Christmas, this note from Trevor and Sue Habeshaw arrived on the SEDA discussion list:

'For those of you who would like to complete your personal set of the 25 books in the '53' Interesting Ways to Teach series, our final title, '53 Interesting Creative Writing Exercises' by Sue Habeshaw and the late Colin Evans has just been published (ISBN 0 947885 98 6) and is available from our website. We would like to thank all our colleagues in SCEDSIP, SCED and SEDA for their help, feedback, advice and support during the last 20-odd years.'

No – it's not quite the end of an era. Most of the '53 Interesting Ways' series will continue to be published, but it was still a surprise to learn that Trevor and Sue Habeshaw have decided that their new volume on creative writing will be the last title in the series which, as Sue says, '*has tried to show how lecturers can give students opportunities to express their ideas, needs and feelings.*' Breeding Welsh cob horses has replaced publishing as the new focus for their time and enthusiasm.

The '53 Interesting Ways' series started in the early 1980s through a collision of happy circumstances. Sue had been teaching English in schools and FE colleges and then at Bristol Poly (UWE today), developing creative teaching methods to the benefit of her pupils and students. In the 1980s she also worked on the DUET project which was very influential for teachers of English and creative writing – it became an FDTL project in the 1990s. Trevor – with a background in FE colleges teaching day-release students Economics and Sociology – had moved into teacher training, first at Durham and then at Bristol Poly. After the restructuring which separated the FE colleges, the Polys expanded rapidly. At Bristol the policy was to train all the new polytechnic lecturers, and so Trevor had quite a task on his hands with up to 50 people from the most varied backgrounds arriving every year. At the same time Graham Gibbs and Andrew Northedge (an unsung hero of this story) had been working on new ways of supporting students at the Open University, writing materials on how to help students to study. When he moved to Oxford Poly, Graham faced a similar challenge to Trevor, with the Educational Methods Unit having to respond to new and extensive pressures.

The genesis of '101 interesting ways to teach' was at a joint UK/Swedish educational development event which had revealed the absence of published practical, useable ideas. The ideas were brainstormed – it is true that a beer mat played a significant part – and Graham Badley from Anglia Poly contributed (amongst other things) the notion that the title would be more memorable if it included a prime

Graham Gibbs, Sue Habeshaw and Trevor Habeshaw, 1988

number. SEDA's predecessor SCEDSIP (the acronym of the Standing Conference of Educational Developments Services in Polytechnics) was the meeting place and support network for a group of educational developers (Trevor wrote more about this in Issue 5.4 of Educational Developments: 'On from SCEDSIP – a brief history of SEDA'). It published Occasional Papers (pink wrappers around typed Gestetner duplicated sheets, in most cases) and so were created '53 interesting things to do in your lectures' and '53 interesting things to do in your seminars and tutorials'.

Trevor and Sue were familiar with forming small companies (in part because of a Director of Bristol Poly who had tried to encourage entrepreneurial activity amongst the staff, but without central investment and only if its staff could guarantee a profit!), so, with Graham Gibbs, they created Technical and Educational Services (the acronym TES did them no harm in the world of education) and the cottage industry (well, cellar industry really) was born. In the early days they did much of the writing, typing, design, proof-reading and distribution themselves, though eventually this last task was outsourced. Printers always offer better deals for larger print runs, so to keep the price of the books low TES had to order plenty of stock – a house was mortgaged for a time, but eventually the project succeeded. The company changed after Graham moved on, but from 1984 to 1991 it was publishing two titles per year, has now published 25 titles in all, and has sold some 80,000 volumes.

The biggest seller has been 'Preparing to Teach', with it and the books on Lectures, Seminars and Assessment still selling well. Trevor and Sue picked out '53 Interesting Communication Exercises for Science Students' as one of the texts of which they were most proud – high quality, discipline-focussed work which sold well, but which is now out of date (and out of print) because the examples and activities for Science students have radically changed. Interestingly, the few books that got 'stuck' with low sales were subject-specific as well. And anything with a substantial