EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Magazine of the Staff and Educational Development Association Ltd (SEDA)

Issue 6.4
Nov. 2005 ISSN 1469-3267
£6 Cover price (UK only)

Contents

1 **Academic Development and its Relationship to Teaching and the Student Learning Experience**
Lorraine Stefani FSEDA

5 **Dissemination the sequel: propagating change?**
Sue Thompson and Martyn Stewart

9 **The role of educational developers in higher education's contribution to sustainable development**
Kerry Shephard

12 **Book Review**

13 **The Banquet for Jill Brookes**
Diana Eastcott

14 **Supporting New Academic Staff (SNAS): enhanced support for a disciplinary focus**
Sue Burkill and Yolande Knight

16 **Training graduate students to teach: an effective model**
Emma Williams and Liz Elvidge

19 **Engaging with Informal Networks in Higher Education**
Roger Ottewill, Paul Riddy and Karen Fill

21 **Staff and Educational Development Association**

23 **Editorial**
Steve Outram

24 **Professional development in leading and managing educational change**
Peter Kahn, FSEDA

SEDA Ltd
John Foster House
36 Gordon Square
London WC1H 0PF
Tel 020 7380 6767
Fax 020 7387 2655
E-mail office@seda.ac.uk

More information about SEDA's activities can be found on our website:
www.seda.ac.uk

Registered in England, No.3709481. Registered in England and Wales as a charity, No.1089537

Academic Development and its Relationship to Teaching and the Student Learning Experience

Lorraine Stefani FSEDA, University of Auckland

A Review of a Research Report

The intention of this article is to review a research report presented by staff at Massey University College of Education, New Zealand led by Tom Prebble. The research was funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Education. The research carried out by the Massey University Team focused on two factors which might be expected to contribute to successful study outcomes for undergraduate students: the impact of student support services and of academic staff development programmes. This article will focus on the findings relating to the impact of academic staff development programmes on student outcomes.

Introduction

Trying to determine whether or not good teaching supports or encourages good learning is a thorny issue. Firstly, is there anyone out there brave enough to come up with a 'generic' definition of 'good teaching' that suits all contexts and student cohorts? Secondly, many academic staff will proudly parade their student evaluations, especially those which show individual academics to be a good teacher. Rarely, of course, would we be so rude as to indicate that the students have no ownership whatsoever over the questions that are asked of them. In the humble opinion of this writer, many questions on student evaluation of teaching forms are designed to elicit fairly positive responses. For example, 'Did the lecturer appear well prepared?' A colourful well laid out Powerpoint presentation might just do the trick on that one. 'Did the lecturer seem enthusiastic about the subject?' Well, a few good anecdotes and a joke thrown in here and there should get a good response on that, too. Of course, I am only being slightly tongue-in-cheek about these examples - but most evaluation questions do not dig very deep to ascertain the impact of the teaching on students' learning. The third point about good teaching is that sufficient numbers of students pass the exams or complete assignments well enough to gain an overall pass mark at the end of a course. This indicator of good teaching assumes that we have good strategies that assess student learning, as opposed to students being able to read the assessment cues and determine what their lecturers want to see.

The point being made is that it is difficult to give simple definitions of 'good teaching' and easily to make the link between good teaching and effective student learning, primarily because the terms 'good teaching' and 'effective student learning' are subjective and context dependent.

EDUCATIONAL
DEVELOPMENTS
The Magazine of SEDA
Issue 6.4
2005

Editorial
Committee
Graham Alsop
Kingston University
Dr Stephen Bostock FSEDA
Keele University
Anthony Brand
University of Hertfordshire
Helen Gale
University of Wolverhampton
Dr Ray Land FSEDA
University of Strathclyde
Mike Laycock
University of East London
Ranald Macdonald FSEDA
Sheffield Hallam University
Steve Outram
The Higher Education Academy
Rachel Segal
The Higher Education Academy
Lorraine Stefani FSEDA
Auckland University, NZ
James Wisdom
Higher Education Consultant

2005 (Vol.6)
Annual Subscription Rates

Individual subscriptions are £24 sterling per year (4 issues) within the UK. Overseas subscribers should add £5 sterling postage and packing for delivery within the EU or £8 sterling for the rest of the world.

Bulk copies can also be purchased in packs of 10 @ £200 sterling per pack.

All orders should be sent to the SEDA Office, either with payment or official order.

NB SEDA members automatically receive copies of *Educational Developments*.

Further issues for us to explore are: what is good academic development? Does good academic development result in improved teaching which in time leads to better student learning outcomes? Do we have the research data to answer these questions in a satisfactory way?

The Massey University research team undertook the major task of examining the available evidence on the impact of academic staff development programmes on teaching behaviours and beliefs, and whether that impact could be tracked through to show tangible benefits relating to student learning outcomes. This is an area of work which has been seriously neglected in research terms partly because of institutional commitment, or lack of it, to determining the added value of their own academic development units. Another reason for the paucity of research in this area is the difficulty in determining cause and effect and establishing a direct link between an academic staff development 'intervention' or input and subsequent enhancement of teaching and student learning outcomes.

What is good teaching?

The researchers found that it was almost impossible to establish a causal relationship across two sets of relationships - between academic developers' efforts to change teachers' beliefs and behaviours and the learning outcomes of students exposed to these changed beliefs and behaviours. As a starting point for their research analysis, they put forward two propositions. The first of these propositions is that:

Good teaching has positive effects on student learning outcomes.

and the second proposition is:

Through a variety of interventions teachers can be assisted to improve the quality of their teaching.

The first proposition has been the subject of a large body of research, not least of all that of Menges and Austin (2001), Perry and Smart (1997), and Pascarella and Terenzini (1991). The interest of the Massey researchers was focused not on reviewing this research but rather on how academic developers have used that research to inform their practice.

According to Prebble *et al.* (2006), the primary guide for academic developers is the conviction that it should be possible to identify a set of teaching attributes or precepts about teaching that contribute to effective student learning. Over the past two decades there have been a series of such precepts put forward by many researchers. For example, a 1981 report by Chohen suggested six dimensions to good teaching:

- Skill: the instructor's overall pedagogical adroitness
- Rapport: the instructor's empathy, accessibility and friendliness to students
- Structure: the extent to which the course is well organised and planned
- Difficulty: the amount and difficulty of work expected of students in a course
- Interaction: the extent to which students are encouraged to become actively engaged in class sessions
- Feedback: the extent to which the instructor provides feedback on the quality of a student's work.

Ramsden *et al.* (1995) introduced the concept of teachers as learners themselves and indicated the importance of assessment of student learning, and having respect for students; Ellington (2000) highlighted the importance of finding out how students learn and of using teaching and learning methods appropriate to context; Chickering and Gamson (1987) gave a very clear indication of what they consider to be the seven key precepts of good teaching and, to a great extent, the 'Nine Principles Guiding Teaching and Learning' presented by the University of Melbourne build on Chickering and Gamson's work but also bring in institutional context:

- An atmosphere of intellectual excitement
- An intensive research culture permeating all teaching and learning activities
- A vibrant and embracing social context
- An international and culturally diverse curriculum and learning community

- Explicit concern and support for individual development
- Clear academic expectations and standards
- Learning cycles of experimentation feedback and assessment
- Premium quality learning resources and technologies
- An adaptive curriculum.

This particular list declares its debt to the research literature on teaching and student learning and acknowledges other institutional attributes and aspirations.

The above series of 'principles of good teaching' is just that - a set of principles. But what evidence is there that academic staff take note of and act upon these principles? The Massey research reports on a number of findings relating to teachers' beliefs about teaching. For example, Johnston (1996) studies the conceptions of teaching held by teaching excellence award winners and found that their 'sense' of good teaching included: demonstrating a clear sense of purpose, a willingness to adapt to situation and context, an emphasis on student learning, enjoyment of teaching and a preparedness to innovate. Dunkin's research (1995) compared novices to experts and found, perhaps not surprisingly, that novice teachers held simple concepts of teaching - a focus on structuring and motivating learning. Prebble *et al.* (2005) give an extensive review of the literature relating to teachers' beliefs about their classroom practice. The findings ranged from teachers taking a scholarly approach to taking a simple mode transmission. Some of the findings are remarkable in that few of the teachers studied had any understanding of a constructivist approach to learning, nor of the importance of helping students to scaffold their learning on the foundation of existing knowledge. Another strand of the research indicated that what teachers said about teaching and learning did not always match their actual practice, indicative, of course, of the need for academic development and developers to work from this perspective.

What are students' conceptions of good teaching?

Provision of appropriate academic development inputs requires us to have knowledge and understanding of teachers' and students' conceptions of teaching and learning. The Massey team also reported on the research on students' conceptions of good teaching.

There is a considerable amount of research relating to students' views on good teaching and what is reported are some of the key attributes valued by students. For example, Entwistle and Tait (1990) found that students valued teaching ability and openness to students to be key elements of good teaching; Swartz *et al.* found instructional presentation and management of student behaviour to be of most importance; Lowman and Matthie (1993) in their research found that students value intellectual excitement and interpersonal rapport; Brown and Atkins (1993) found a caring, systematic and stimulating approach to teaching to be most satisfactory. Research in New Zealand found the three key factors that distinguish good teachers to be: respect for the students, organisation and presentation skills, and a willingness to challenge students (Patrich and Smart, 1998).

Summing up the teachers' and students' conceptions of good teaching, the research message is consistent: effective teachers are knowledgeable about their subject, they adopt an organised and systematic approach, they are enthusiastic and interesting, they respect their students and they have high expectations of their students' performance, and it is those findings that have informed the work of academic developers since the early days of their profession.

What factors inform the work of Academic Developers?

The sources of inspiration for academic developers' efforts to improve the knowledge and teaching practice of teachers in higher education are: the body of research literature on teaching and learning pointing to a range of models of effective teaching, studies on teachers' and students' conceptions of good teaching, and a further source of direction is the loose framework of concepts founded on the key observations relating to:

- Students' orientations towards learning - e.g. a deep versus a surface approach
- The qualitative and quantitative differences regarding student outcomes
- Differences in students' metacognitive approaches to learning
- Variations in teachers' understandings of teaching and learning
- The understanding that all learning takes place in a context that is mediated by the perceptions of both students and teacher.

Having set the terrain linking teaching and learning, Prebble *et al.* (2005) set out to take a closer look at the research evidence on the impact of academic development programmes on teaching practice. They did so by examining the research on the effectiveness of the various approaches academic developers have commonly adopted in their efforts to influence the behaviour of teachers.

Research and Evaluation of Academic Development

Academic developers have been acutely aware for more than a quarter of a century that their efforts to evaluate their effectiveness have fallen short of any acceptable standard of evidence. Kreber and Brook (2001) have noted that:

- The most frequently evaluated aspects of training programmes are one-off workshops and many aspects of Academic Developers' work is not evaluated at all
- Assessment of possible changes in staffs' beliefs or student achievement are the least common practice
- Lack of time, money and staff are the most frequently cited factors preventing systematic evaluation
- A lack of a common pedagogical theory among academic developers was noted by Rowland (2006).

Clearly, these findings are problematic for Academic

Developers and academic development units. How do we justify our existence if we cannot give clear indication of the added value or the tangible outcomes of our work? Academic developers themselves cannot be entirely blamed for this. 'Development' in itself is a contested issue. At its best, academic development should result in longer term efficiency gains for institutions - but there is still widespread reluctance on behalf of academics to believe that they should and could enhance their academic practice. Institutions themselves do not necessarily place high value on their academic development units, seeing them as 'service' units rather than scholarly departments, and often fund them at a level little more than basic subsistence. How then can these units be expected to carry out in-depth research on their added value?

Modes of academic development and outcomes

Academic developers and their policy makers and funders are intensely interested in learning which methods of academic development actually make a difference. The coming of age of academic development and developers is to show that our methodologies are effective, particularly as we steer the sector towards policies of mandatory teacher training and accreditation of academics. To ascertain what evidence does exist relating to actual and potential outcomes of the work of academic developers, the Massey team studied the literature on:

- Short training courses
- *In situ* training - e.g. the establishment of learning communities or communities of practice; quality learning circles; reflection on practice
- Consultancy, peer assessment and mentoring
- Student assessment/evaluation of teaching
- Intensive staff development.

A brief summary of the findings relating to these particular modes of working is as follows:

Short training courses (half a day or less)
Menges *et al.* (1998) and Weiner and Lange (1997) concluded that the research evidence to support the positive impact of short courses on teaching practice is very weak. Short courses however remain a useful way to introduce new knowledge and skills to large numbers of staff. The over-arching problem with short courses is that individuals may gain a great deal from a workshop but find they are a lone voice when they return to their department. Opportunities to act on new knowledge and ideas may be very limited.

In situ training
The academic work group is generally an effective setting for developing the complex knowledge attitudes and skills involved in teaching. Many academic developers now promote the concept of 'communities of practice' encouraging in depth scholarly debate and dialogue.

Consulting, peer assessment and mentoring
Teachers can be assisted to improve the quality of their teaching through feedback, advice and support for their teaching from a colleague or academic development consultant. More universities are encouraging mentoring for new academic staff, and many accredited programmes for academic staff include peer observation or peer support of teaching.

Student assessment of teaching
Student assessments/evaluations, despite their flaws, are among the most reliable and accessible indicators of the effectiveness of teaching. When used appropriately, they are likely to lead to significant improvements in the quality of the teaching and student learning. What is of great significance is how academic staff respond to and act upon student assessments.

Intensive staff development
Intensive and comprehensive staff development programmes can be effective in transforming teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and their teaching practice. In particular, teachers can be assisted to shift from a teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred approach and to align all the elements of the teaching situation in order to achieve positive student outcomes. This type of development is, of course, resource intensive but the growth in accredited programmes relating to academic practice may be the best way forward for real cultural change.

In summary - the research would suggest that:

- Short courses will continue to make an important contribution to introducing staff to an understanding of institutional systems and policies about teaching and to some of the technical skills involved in teaching
- Working with groups of staff offers better prospects for achieving widespread changes of policy and practice
- Working with individuals is an effective, if expensive, use of the development resource
- The return from the investment we are already making in obtaining structured feedback from students would be multiplied if we helped teachers to learn from that feedback
- Fundamental changes in teachers' beliefs about teaching come from extensive reflection on practice and exposure to more appropriate models.

The research carried out by the Massey team is extensive and detailed and this short report on their work cannot do it justice. What it does highlight is the urgent need to engage in critical dialogue, debate and research on the expected and actual outcomes of our endeavours as Academic Developers. There is a need for greater rigour, too, in how we report on our own work.

Academic Development is a complex set of activities and we will need to be clear about the goals of our work beyond running a good workshop that is positively evaluated by participants, or risk doing exactly what we see many academics doing - using simple evaluation tools for a very complex endeavour and priding ourselves on how well we are doing!

Where to from here?

Prebble *et al.* (2005) end their report with a series of

recommendations. Perhaps the most important statement they make in this section is:

> 'Tertiary institutions should be encouraged to view their academic development units as centres for research on teaching and learning as well as training and development. This would increase the status and appeal of the academic development profession, as well as engendering a continuing commitment to informing practice with research.'

The full report of this study can be accessed from: **http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=10185&data=1**

All references quoted are in the original document.

The research team comprised:

Tom Prebble
Helen Hargraves
Linda Leach
Kogi Naidoo
Gordon Suddaby
Nick Zepke
College of Education, Massey University

Lorraine Stefani FSEDA is the Director of the Centre for Professional Development at the University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Dissemination the sequel: propagating change?

Sue Thompson and **Martyn Stewart,** Liverpool John Moores University

In a previous issue of *Educational Developments* (6.2, May 2005, pp 1-5) our article 'Developing a Dissemination Strategy' described the role of dissemination in raising the profile of learning and teaching within the University. The integrated model of dissemination we developed focused on strategies for engagement beyond 'the usual suspects' at all levels within the institution, working 'from the middle out' with both the 'bottom up' and the 'top down'.

In deploying strategies for engagement our focus was broad and we have been particularly cognisant of the pivotal role that senior managers play in the enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment. We recognise that much of what we have been engaged in has had a change management focus, what Trowler, Saunders and Knight (2003) call 'change thinking, change practices.'

Our first article stressed how we have used dissemination as a strategy for communication with senior managers - VC, PVCs, Deans, School and Service Directors. A dimension that we touched on, but did not explore, was that of strategy for influencing and contributing to the shaping of institutional learning and teaching policy and strategy.

In investigating what would and what does work we developed a multi-faceted dissemination strategy that encompasses a range of different approaches, informed by some guiding principles:

- To always ask ourselves 'why would staff want to engage?'
- To promote innovation and effective practice by networking
- To promote ownership by staff
- To accommodate different preferences for professional development
- To keep the language clear.

The focus of this article is to explore how as educational developers we have used this 'model' or approach more broadly in a strategic change management context, where our 'customers' are staff with a management and leadership role within the University.

How does the educational development unit interface with managers at different levels in the institution? What do we do? How do we do it? Do we know that it makes a difference? Asking ourselves these questions highlighted that, despite all the evaluation activity we undertake across the range of what we do, we did not have a strong sense of how staff with leadership and management roles make use of our interventions and activities in their own work.

This led to our conducting an opportunistic email survey that included the VC, PVCs, Deans of Faculty, Directors of Schools and Services and Faculty and School Learning and Teaching Co-ordinators. We asked the question, 'from your engagements with the Learning Development Unit, could you provide us with examples/comments of how and why this has been helpful (or not) to you in your own working context?' We received 20 responses, many of them detailed, covering the full range of staff surveyed. Clearly we cannot claim that the responses are representative and they can only serve as a snapshot of perspectives, but they were illuminating. What we have done for the purposes of this article is to attempt to categorise the responses and to try to ascertain the extent to which they map against the guiding principles that underpin the dissemination model we have already described.

Broadly speaking, the range of responses encompassed five key areas: strategy, influencing thinking, provision of support, connectivity and ways of working.

Focus on strategy

It is not surprising that many of the responses referred to strategy and, in particular, to the institutional Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) strategy. The learning and teaching strategy is a key document in setting institutional directions, goals and targets for learning and teaching development. As Percival and Tucker (2004) argue, synergy between the senior management of an institution and its educational development function is critical in development of institutional policy and strategy for academic development.

The Learning Development Unit (LDU) is closely associated with the institutional LTA strategy. It was centrally involved in its development and has a remit to support its implementation across the university and for co-ordinating its development and review. This is important since the LTA strategy provides the organising framework for the work of LDU and for our interactions with the rest of the university.

> *'In a context where other drivers such as quality/finance/research have clear and powerful institutional locations and constitute a clear set of frameworks for our activities it is vital to have a similar presence for learning, teaching and assessment.'*
>
> Faculty Learning and Teaching Co-ordinator

Aspects of our role that managers found particularly important were:

- The forward-looking role of the unit in informing, influencing and shaping corporate strategy

- Support in operationalising the strategy through dissemination, clear communication and practical help for new ways of working.

> *' We are always under pressure from change from internal and external forces…. This gets passed down to staff to implement (who most of the time feel that they are treading water) and who are also performing across RAE and enterprise activities. Changes in LTA issues would break their back if strategies were not clearly reported and support offered by LDU…Support from LDU on issues like attendance and how to improve it and how and when to implement PDP and the processes involved is not only helpful, it's…essential. A school like this could not keep its head above water without this strategic and practical help.'*
>
> Director of School

Influencing thinking

Our informal survey elicited examples of how the work of an educational development unit can influence the thinking of others in conceptual, strategic and, ultimately, practical ways. Examples include:

- Learning and teaching guides that apply theory to practice (curriculum design, assessment, learner support)
- The LTA strategy framework informing the development of other strategies and processes, such as the HR strategy and support structures within student services
- Briefing papers for senior management (for example, when selecting the institutional Virtual Learning Environment)
- Setting up and co-ordinating projects and investigations to inform development of policy and strategy (development of Learner Support Recommendations)
- 'issues based' forums (on induction, personal tutoring, disability support)
- Articles in the LJMU learning and teaching Press
- the annual learning and teaching conference (and involvement of both academic and support staff).

> *'In relation to quality enhancement it is, without doubt, the (Assessment) 'Blue Book'. I don't know why it made such an impression on staff but it did. As a tool for promoting change at programme and module level it has been excellent. I think it worked, and still works, because everybody has a copy (or can access it online), although the paper copy is very powerful, it is small, compact, clear, has checklists and because it was blue … has a sort of iconic status! It gives, I feel, a sense of confidence to people - here is a clear set of guidelines/requirements on assessment that we can all share. It is held up in meetings, cited at staff development events - I witnessed it being explained with enthusiasm to reviewers at the institutional audit!'*
>
> Director of School

> *'The work you've done on the LTA strategy has provided clarity of understanding about the University's key strategic aims and objectives. We've been able to consult the strategy in developing our own strategic planning as there are obvious synergies between the work of LDU and Learning and Information Services.'*
>
> Director of Service

> *'The LTA conference is a key factor in the development of teaching-related scholarship. This Faculty has always been well represented which makes it popular with Faculty management. It gives a clear destination and outlet to colleagues engaged in projects. Colleagues who attend also bring back ideas…The Press is another outlet and provides the opportunity for colleagues to see their research and reflections on practice in print.'*
>
> Faculty Learning and Teaching Co-ordinator

Provision of specific and expert support

Managers also highlighted the role of LDU in the provision of specific and expert support for learning, teaching and assessment. This includes supporting new learning and teaching structures and processes, technical support in using the institution's VLE, advice and consultancy on all aspects of curriculum design and development and on researching teaching. Approaches highlighted as being of benefit to others in their roles were:

- Implementation support for new structures and processes for learning and teaching in the context of organisational re-structuring (into Faculties)
- Support for external quality assessment visits
- Specific implementation support for using the institution's VLE- technical advice, 'Ready Reference' guide, workshops
- Resource guides and implementation guides distributed to all staff that teach and support

(on assessment, curriculum design, learner support, using the VLE, personal tutoring)

- Capacity building work on pedagogic research to support novice/busy staff in researching and publishing in the area of learning and teaching.

'The LDU supported a change management process when we went through restructuring to faculties. This identified the need for a local learning and teaching infrastructure that would bring about the change that was needed, without this layer we would have continued in much the same way as before (project driven, lower impact), so the LTA strategy/LDU could actually take credit for outputs such as improved staff development … improved research outputs through support (from LDU) … leading to more staff publishing and researching in the learning and teaching area …improved PDP - the publications developed by the centre are superb and are an excellent, easy to use resource for staff … it has also allowed faculties to engage in local PDP activities so, for example, we have developed faculty guides … and personal files for every level one student customised to each school ... we have been able to raise the profile of learning and teaching in the faculty …this means that learning and teaching issues are at the forefront of school strategy…'

Faculty Learning and Teaching Co-ordinator

'I value LDU's role in QAA Subject Reviews, Developmental Engagements and now Audit - this has been hugely beneficial locally and has got us out of many a hole.'

Dean of Faculty

'The VLE could have been 'driven' as a technology-led project, but this would have been the kiss of death. It is in its natural home and you have support structures/teams working together…for common purpose. This has been a very good development.'

Service Director (Computing and Information Services)

Connectivity

The term 'connectivity' encapsulates a range of factors highlighted in responses to our survey. It relates to the importance of an educational development unit being seen to work across the institution and, importantly, making connections between interactions at different levels. It also relates to connectivity with external agendas, knowledge, groups and communities of learning and teaching practice and to internal networks and more formal working groups and committees. Some examples of this are:

- Network groups/project teams
- Cross team working
- Connectivity to external knowledge
- Integration into committee and management structures.

'Probably the biggest impact for me and (the Faculty) has been the link between the Learning and Teaching Development manager at Faculty level and her links through to the LDU - this has been particularly useful in enabling the delivery of strategic priorities for the Faculty which are in keeping with University objectives.'

Dean of Faculty

'Colleagues from (the Faculty) have also played a significant part in centrally directed projects concerning PDP and student support, eLearning and FE/HE collaboration, among others. This all feeds back into our own processes and for example played a big part in the CETL bid.'

Faculty Learning and Teaching Co-ordinator

'One of the things I think is of most value … is the approach taken to joint planning and the teasing out of difficult new issues between the key support services - the ways of working tend to be organic and with an open agenda. I think all the service departments concerned makes this work, but LDU does bring an approach to planning that is clearly informed by professional practice and which assists in this sort of iterative process.'

Director of Service

'You provide a body of knowledge and connectivity to the rest of the world's knowledge on specific technical issues, an obvious example being the VLE.'

Pro Vice Chancellor

'LDU's activities are promoted through the committee and management structure … (which is) remarkably integrated with no pronounced academic-service divide. Therefore the implementation of learning and teaching strategy has a wide meaning and involves directly those supporting teaching and learning.'

Executive Director

Ways of working

Informing, influencing, pressurising, brokering, enthusing and championing are other key aspects of our educational development role highlighted as important by managers. The Vice Chancellor, when interviewed for this article, highlighted the importance of our role in influencing the development of strategy (informed by knowledge of developments within and external to the university), then of interpreting strategy and supporting its delivery in real and practical ways.

Perhaps most significant for busy and hard pressed staff is our role in 'translating' or interpreting teaching and learning policy initiatives into a clear and accessible form that people can easily work with and relate to their own context.

Specific examples cited of these approaches were:

- Influencing policy and strategy (introduction and implementation of the VLE)
- Translating and interpreting strategy (communication of LTA strategy, resource guides)
- Championing of learning and teaching issues that are of concern to staff (learner support, student retention, improving assessment practices)
- Brokering (the role of the unit in identifying the synergies of separate proposals from different disciplines to broker a combined CETL bid in partnership with the LDU).

Importantly, the way we do things seems to be at least as important as what we do: 'realistic', 'practical', 'approachable', 'supportive' 'collaborative', 'human' and 'friendly', were attributes that managers valued in their interactions with the unit.

These are all characteristics that our audience of educational developers will recognise in themselves!

This does, though, highlight a key challenge for educational developers. Much of what we do is about working with people on the ground in a facilitative and supportive capacity but, simultaneously, it is important to work politically and strategically. There is a delicate juggling act in ensuring the right balance of presence and impact and of backstage and front of house activity. This also brings challenges for those with leadership roles in educational development in 'managing what happens ''out there'', that is across and beyond the institution, and ''in here'', within their own team.' (Thompson, 2004).

A significant emphasis was placed on the importance of the educational development unit being credible and trusted. What makes us credible and trustworthy? For senior managers this related to our knowledge, understanding and interpretation of 'what's out there', our environmental scanning of the external world, and of what's happening on the ground within the university. It is also about being seen to deliver, to do things that are perceived as helpful and useful and to have identifiable outputs. This does beg the question, how long does it take to be effective? Much of the work described here is culminative, reflecting cultural change processes within the university as a whole and the maturation of educational development activity spanning a decade.

The comments we received from one Director of School read like a case history of learning and teaching development in the university over years and highlighted the complex cultural change issues that she has faced in her role. She spoke of welcoming initial developments that helped her to focus on the core business of the school (teaching) and of the importance of the learning and teaching strategy in providing a set of strategic objectives to help her push forward the learning and teaching agenda. She described educational development initiatives (such as funded projects, learning and teaching awards, the learning and teaching conference) as:

> *'giving my best teachers a platform to develop their skills...they are now seen as leaders by the rest of the school (leaders not managers) and they do carry forward more initiatives within the school. These developments would have been inconceivable 10 years ago.'*

She highlighted the importance of the leadership role of the educational development unit in influencing development of policy and strategy at executive level, while at the same time being seen to provide support on the ground for its implementation. In her view, the single most important work of the educational development unit has been its contribution to the status of teaching and teachers.

Some future challenges

Reflecting on how we work from the 'middle out' with 'bottom up and 'top down' has emphasised the importance of the strategic role we can play in influencing and supporting changes in thinking and practice at all levels within the institution. Importantly, there is a key role for us here in helping to ensure that what comes from the 'top down', reflects what has come from the 'bottom up'. As Elton (2002), in arguing for a change theory approach to dissemination, says,

> *'the most important feature of successful change in universities … (is) that it must come from a combination of top down and bottom up pressures, with the top down being facilitative and the bottom up innovative - a difficult* pas de deux.'

Our work in supporting change management and strategy development and implementation, through interactions with leaders and managers across the university, closely mirrors the approaches underpinning strategies for engagement deployed in our dissemination strategy:

- Aligning our work with institutional strategic goals
- 'Tuning' what we do for different people and purposes
- Adopting multiple approaches
- Promoting connectivity (networking)
- Playing to individual strengths and expertise when deploying the LDU team.

Much of our work has been focused on supporting the development and implementation of local structures and processes for learning and teaching. As Faculties and Schools increasingly take ownership, it raises issues about the future role of the central educational development unit.

A School Learning and Teaching Co-ordinator described a key achievement in learning and teaching developments in her school in recent years as being that of widening the range of the 'usual suspects', with more learning and teaching 'activists' in the school, more staff attending conferences with a learning and teaching focus, more staff presenting outputs of pedagogic research, all supported by the School Director highlighting their learning and teaching work in staff meetings. She ended by saying,

> *'To what extent this is due to the sterling work of yourselves and others is of course difficult to pinpoint.'*

This is of course exactly as it should be. The School has taken the learning and teaching agenda and made it their own. But where does that leave the central educational development unit? Will we, like good teachers, become progressively unnecessary?

One senior manager, in musing (at least we think he was musing!) about the role of the Learning Development Unit, wondered whether its original purpose had been to initiate, embed, and then disappear.

The LTA strategy is well on the road towards maturity. The University is currently determining its future strategic direction. This calls for some strategic re-positioning on our part.

Time to re-invent ourselves?

References and further reading

Elton, L. (2002) *Dissemination: a change theory approach,* LTSN Generic Centre, York and http://

www.heacademy.ac.uk/1745.htm, accessed 24 October 2005.

Liverpool John Moores University Learning and Teaching website, http://cwis.livjm.ac.uk/lid/ltweb, accessed 24 October, 2005.
(See website for Learning Teaching and Assessment (LTA) strategy, resource guides on Assessment ('Blue Book'*), Curriculum Design, Learner Support, Personal Tutoring, Blackboard VLE 'Ready Reference'** and issues of the Learning and Teaching Press.
*for Assessment 'Blue Book' click on 'Assessment' and then 'Requirements and Guidelines for Implementing the Assessment Review Recommendations' 2nd edition, July 2003.
**for Blackboard 'Ready Reference' click on 'Technology in Learning'.)

Percival, F. and Tucker, G. (2004) 'Developing institutional policy and strategy for academic development: how can senior management and educational development units work productively together?' in Baume, D. and Kahn, P. (eds) *Enhancing Staff and Educational Development,* London, Routledge-Falmer.

Stewart, M. and Thompson, S. (2005) 'Developing a Dissemination Strategy', *Educational Developments,* 6 (2): 1-5.

Thompson, S. (2004) 'Leading an educational development unit' in Baume, D. and Kahn, P. (eds) *Enhancing Staff and Educational Development,* London, Routledge-Falmer.

Trowler, P., Saunders, M. and Knight, P. (2003) *Change Thinking, Change Practices,* LTSN Generic Centre, York and http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/1745.htm, accessed 24 October 2005.

Sue Thompson is Director of Learning Development at Liverpool John Moores University.

Martyn Stewart works in the Learning Development Unit at Liverpool John Moores University as Co-ordinator for Research and Dissemination.

The role of educational developers in higher education's contribution to sustainable development

Kerry Shephard, University of Southampton

HEFCE wants to make sustainable development a central part of its strategy for the future development of the higher education sector. *[Good.]* It wants to 'support the sector in a way that encourages it to .... develop curricular, pedagogy and extra-curricular activities that enable students to develop the values, skills and knowledge to contribute to sustainable development' (HEFCE, 2005, consultation), and much more besides. *[This is HEFCE-speak but still good.]*

Let's see if we can follow what is being proposed here. We, the human race, are depleting and damaging our planet's resources. The solution may be to ensure that our activities become sustainable, so that we leave to the next generation at least what we inherited from the previous occupants. This will not be easy, so it is particularly important that our graduates, educated to do the not so easy bits of life, know what is expected of them and act accordingly (use their 'values, skills and knowledge to contribute to sustainable development'). OK until the last bit? Clearly we expect future graduates to do things that we, the current responsible occupants, have not ourselves managed to do particularly well. This is going to be tough. At this stage, staff developers will be forgiven for hoping that it is someone else's job!

But surely this is Toyne-take-two? Peter Toyne caused me to lose many nights' sleep in the early 90s (See Toyne, 1996, for a review of the Toyne Report). His agenda for further and higher education on 'environmental responsibility' convinced me to leave my backwater of biology and embark on an unguided voyage into staff development, trying to encourage HE teachers in diverse disciplines to include environmental concerns in their otherwise subject-based curricula. They thought I was odd, possibly even deranged; a diagnosis confirmed when I wrote an environmental policy and strategy for that institution and tried to convince that VC of its benefits. Some years later I realised just how odd I was, and indeed how tough a job it is to change people's values, attitudes and behaviours. For that is the challenge. Giving up something that we have, so that we can hand it on to someone else, requires a commitment to particular values that does not come easy. Not only did I question the values of my colleagues in HE, as an environmental scientist I questioned my own. I found myself unable to give up my car, my love of cheap wine and my occasional trip down-under. Miraculous advances in technology aside, we shall have to make sacrifices if our development is to be truly sustainable. So this article is a plea for help, not a call to arms.

Now educational developers know lots about values and attitudes. We have all read the papers that formed the

building blocks of our profession. Bloom and Krathwol (1956) made us think about the cognitive domain of learning but they also identified levels of learning in the affective domain (Krathwohl, Bloom and Bertram, 1973). The affective domain includes an ability to listen, to respond in interactions with others, to demonstrate attitudes or values appropriate to particular situations, to demonstrate balance and consideration, and, at the highest level, to display a commitment to principled practice on a day to day basis, alongside a willingness to revise judgement and change behaviour in the light of new evidence. This hierarchy seems almost tailor-made for the developing environmentally-aware learner. We start with a willingness to listen, to read and to acquire information. We progress to discuss environmental issues with others and then formulate our own views on the issues to develop opinions that shape our own interactions with others, and with our environment. Later we start to make life choices and experiment with prioritising 'good for the environment', 'good for us' and 'good for our dependants'. At some point, and at the top of this particular hierarchy, we emerge showing self-reliance, an ability to cooperate or even lead and the confidence to live our life in the way that we choose. People know what we stand for but people will also appreciate that we are constantly seeking new ways to do things and reassessing our decisions. Wow! Something beyond the eco-warrior then!

There is a role here for educational developers. Not the environmental bit [... *it's OK, those who have them can keep a second home in Brittany and that gas-guzzling 4x4, for now. We do not, ourselves, have to commit to this particular value*]. Also, there is no particular urgency implied. HEFCE's strategy for sustainable development is long-term and aims to ensure that 'in the next 10 years, the higher education sector in England will be recognised as a major contributor to society's efforts to achieve sustainability'. We can, if our values allow us, take our time. HEFCE expects us to help by showing our teaching colleagues in HE how they can promote values in their students that will allow them (the students) to contribute to sustainable development. We can do that, surely? We do know how to teach values, don't we? And surely helping others to learn how to teach is our job? I would not wish to confuse the values that educational developers share with those that we promote, but there is something in common between them. We share a commitment to understand how people learn, a scholarly, professional and ethical approach, a commitment to teamwork and to inclusivity, to continued reflection and to promoting people, systems and processes. We do not ourselves, necessarily, share a commitment to saving the planet, but helping others to save the planet by enabling them to teach sustainable development values falls into our professional role. As well as being part of some specific curricular, these values are now being given to the HE sector alongside, for example, inclusivity. Definitely a role for educational developers here - no question.

It is interesting to note that, traditionally, education has avoided these 'affective goals'. It is quite possible for learners to learn lots about their subject and be able to describe, comprehend, apply, analyse, synthesise and evaluate to the extent that they can pass their exams, without actually changing their attitudes as indicated by the way they respond or behave afterwards. Bloom, Hastings and Madaus (1971) discussed this 'educational failure' in a general context. They suggested that educators avoid being too open about their affective objectives because they are concerned about charges of indoctrination or brainwashing. In addition, many educators regard these matters as 'private' rather than public and also express concern that affective outcomes are far too long-term to be assessed within the timescale of any particular learning programme. It is relatively rare in traditional education for attainment of these values and attitudes to be openly assessed or for programmes that attempt to develop values to be evaluated on this basis. Formal education tends to leave these matters for someone else. In formal education we focus on cognitive outcomes, partly because these can be assessed but also because we think that the issues involved in the affective domain are too tricky for formal education to cope with; we leave affective outcomes to informal education (perhaps particularly to television) and hope for the best.

There are, however, some areas where affective outcomes have become more acceptable and common within formal education. Building on the work of Bloom, Hastings and Madaus described above, it would be unusual to find an educator today who thought that attitudes on, for example, racial equality, were private and therefore should not be actively promoted in formal education. Indeed, HEIs, as public-sector bodies, have a legal obligation to promote racial equality. If not race, then what about gender equality? We might expect attitudes on inclusivity to be addressed implicitly, or even explicitly, in a wide range of disciplines. We have a long way to go before many environmental considerations achieve the same level of acceptance, but it is a reasonable interpretation to say that HEFCE expects that the values of sustainable development in particular will gain credibility as affective outcomes. Even now, in many subject settings, some teachers in HE are happy not only to teach that non-sustainable exploitation of our planet's resources is occurring but also to engage in value-laden debate of our moral position as exploiters. HEFCE wants us to encourage more teachers to adopt this stance. How will we (the profession of educational development) respond? Will we regard these matters as private and beyond our remit or will we use the skills and knowledge of our profession to help others educate our undergraduates in this domain?

If we were minded to help others teach affective outcomes, how might they, and we, go about it? Although some attempt to address the affective domain is probably involved in many forms of education, it is in the education of the 'caring professions' that it seems to be most explicit and from this area that most research is drawn. Nurses, doctors and others are trained to heal and help, but do they care? And how is their caring attitude portrayed in their behaviour? Educating people to care apparently involves setting learning outcomes that include affective attributes. I read that it also involves extensive use of dialogue, case studies, questioning, simulations, role-play, perspective sharing and values enquiry, and debate to achieve them (see for example,

Howe, 2002, 2003). Indeed, much early literature suggests that these are the best ways to encourage the acquisition of values. And learners can fail to achieve these outcomes. Early research suggests that the design of teaching and learning activities does need to ensure that learners progress through the hierarchy of affective outcomes so as to avoid values being entrenched rather than developed. Good role models help, too (Gagne, 1985), and poor role models may lead to the acquisition of the wrong values (Paice, Heard and Moss, 2002).

A totally objective bystander might briefly consider the charge of indoctrination here. Surely it would be possible to 'teach' everything that a health-care worker needs to know to effectively apply the benefits of modern medicine without actually requiring the learner to care? Perhaps, but apparently neither the caring professions nor educators currently subscribe to this view. We want our doctors and nurses to care about patients and we (HE) are happy to include caring objectives in learning programmes. Well, HEFCE wants our graduates to care about our environment and wants HE to include sustainable development outcomes in its learning programmes; surely our role is to help HE do it?

To return to the underlying problem (and I hope that it is our problem and that as a profession we will collectively seek solutions): I am not entirely convinced that it is possible to teach values, even armed with wholesome advice from Bloom *et al*. I hope that it is, but we already make use of dialogue, case studies, questioning, simulations, role-play, perspective sharing and values enquiry and debate to promote personal change and we know how difficult this is. I am also not yet convinced that teachers who have themselves not made a commitment to sustainable development can instil within their students greater respect for our environment and, despite what I wrote above, the same probably applies to educational developers, including myself. I am not, personally, a particularly good role model (as measured by my carbon and ecological footprints, for example). Race, gender and caring seem so much simpler to embrace than giving up private transport, central heating and cheap flights.

References

Bloom, B. S., Hastings, J. T., and Madaus, G. F. (1971) *Handbook on formative and summative evaluation of student learning,* New York, McGraw-Hill.

Bloom, B. S., Krathwol D. R. *et al.* (1956) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals,* New York, David McKay.

Krathwohl, D. R., Bloom, B. S., and Bertram, B. M. (1973) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals. Handbook II: Affective Domain,* New York, David McKay.

Gagne, R. (1985) *The conditions of learning,* 4th Edition, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

HEFCE (2005) *Sustainability,* (overview) http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lgm/sustain/, (consultation) http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2005/05_01/05_01.doc, (final strategy) http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2005/05_28/, accessed 19 September 2005.

Howe, A. (2002) 'Developing professional attitudes in training: report from the AMEE Berlin professional development workshop', *Medical Teacher,* 24 (2): 208-212.

Howe, A. (2003) 'Twelve Tips for developing professional attitudes in training', *Medical Teacher,* 25 (5): 485-487.

Paice, E., Heard, S. and Moss, F. (2002) 'How important are role models in making good doctors?', *BMJ* 325:707-710.

Toyne, P. (1996) 'The Toyne Review', cited in *British Government Panel on Sustainable Development,* Third Report 1997, http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/panel-sd/panel3/10.htm, accessed 19 September, 2005.

Readers who wish to learn more about environmental education will find the following text interesting:

Elder, J. L. (2003) *A field guide to environmental literacy,* North American Association for Environmental Education, Rock Spring, GA, USA.

Dr Kerry Shephard is an educational developer and Learning Technologies Coordinator at the University of Southampton's Centre for Learning and Teaching. He has a research and teaching background in higher education in the biological sciences and broad interests in developing and evaluating innovative approaches to support learning.

Correction:

Educational Developments 6.3 contained an article by David Baume and Ruth Pilkington introducing two new SEDA-PDF qualifications. In describing the national scope for such awards reference was made to the '24 Subject Centres' and, later, that there is 'also the work of the Higher Education Academy'. Of course, the 24 Subject Centres are integral to the Higher Education Academy and are responsible for a significant amount of the Academy's work.

Many apologies for any confusion.

Information for Contributors

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

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

For more information please contact the SEDA office via email: office@seda.ac.uk

Book Review

Emerging Issues in the Practice of University Learning and Teaching

Geraldine O'Neill, Sarah Moore, Barry McMullin (eds)

AISHE Readings, No 1, 2005

ISBN 0-9550134-0-2

Web edition: http://www.aishe.org/readings/2005-1

This book is a collection of 17 papers written by members of the Irish Educational Developers Group and published by the All Ireland Society for Higher Education.

It emerged from a professional development process which included a "Writers' Week" held in Delphi, Connemara, in September 2004, sponsored by the Higher Education Authority and facilitated by Rowena Murray of the University of Strathclyde. The process was influenced by the University of Limerick's "writers' retreat" model of professional development. After a regular morning session, participants were free to spend the days writing, discussing, reading and commenting, or enjoying the pleasures of a country house hotel set in woodland between mountains and the sea. Drafts were prepared beforehand, and texts were polished afterwards.

The intended readership is the "new to competent lecturer in Higher Education who is dealing with learning and teaching issues on a daily basis" and it will be especially valuable for those taking learning and teaching Diplomas or Certificates.

The book is divided into three sections. The first, "working in the changing world of learning and teaching in higher education", contains two papers which explore the relationship between scholarship, pedagogical theory and practice. The large central section ("moving the focus from teaching to learning") contains chapters on student-centred learning, active learning, expanding the repertoire, problem-based learning, the use of IT, practical evaluation, collaborative project-based learning and module design. The final section – "developing and growing as a university teacher" – has five chapters, on trends in academic staff development, institutional research, sources for pedagogic research, the use of student evaluations, students' writing and the evaluation of VLEs.

Although it is invidious to select only a few items of significance from the work of 23 authors, I was particularly taken with the chapter by Sarah Moore and Nyiel Kuol on the impact of students' evaluations of teaching. One of the most common questions I have been asked by Irish lecturers in recent years is what might the English be doing with quality assurance, and my replies have often (rightly) led to a vigorous discussion of the virtues of the polar opposite. Nevertheless, Moore and Kuol note that the pressure to introduce formal, centralised systems of student evaluation of teaching is growing, and discuss how best to handle lecturers' emotions and self-esteem to increase the chances of positive and beneficial outcomes. Their "feedback reaction matrix" is a useful analytical tool, and their strategies for analysing feedback are very sound. "Too often, SET systems have been compulsory, publicly displayed, uncontextualised, unsupportive, simplistic and interpreted in isolated ways - features which render SETs punitive bureaucratic tools rather than supportive mechanisms through which enhanced learning environments can be created and sustained." Scaling their personal "feedback reaction matrix" up to institutional level fits perfectly with what we know of recent reactions to the UK's National Student Survey.

Another significant chapter has been written by Barry McMullin on aspects of the e-learning revolution. Sceptical of the big claims and the business models, McMullin notes that "from a social constructionist view of learning (and teaching) there are signs of a slower, quieter – and much cheaper – Internet revolution, under such unlikely rallying cries as 'open content', 'wikiwiki', 'blogging' and 'moodling'." McMullin notes the values inherent in these four aspects are closer to the core academic practices of shared knowledge, open debate, peer review, contribution on the basis of the search for truth not the claim of authority, public writing, and the dramatic growth of creativity, research and development within open source communities.

True to these values, the volume has been made available under the Creative Commons "Attribution Non-Commercial Share Alike 2.0" Licence. Creative Commons says: "This licence lets others remix, tweak, and build upon your work non-commercially, as long as they credit you and license their new creations under the identical terms. Others can download and redistribute your work … but they can also translate, make remixes, and produce new stories based on your work. All new work based on yours will carry the same licence, so any derivatives will also be non-commercial in nature." While the content of the volume may be most particularly relevant to new lecturers, its ethos and manner of production has plenty to say to members of SEDA in their work to build the community of practice around educational development.

James Wisdom, Co-Chair, SEDA

Notice to Publishers

Books for review should be sent to:

Rachel Segal

Book Review Editor, c/o
The Higher Education Academy,
Genesis 3, Innovation Way,
York Science Park,
York YO10 5DQ

Email:
r.a.segal@heacademy.ac.uk
or **office@seda.ac.uk**

The Banquet for Jill Brookes

Diana Eastcott, University of Central England

A SEDA Banquet was held on 11 October 2005 at Bertolleli's Restaurant in London as a thank you to Jill Brookes and her staff for their enormous contribution to the development of SEDA as an organisation.

Jill joined SCED (Standing Conference on Educational Development), as the organisation was known at that time, in 1988. Mike O'Neill was then Chair of SCED and I (Diana Eastcott) was Secretary. Membership was free and the ethos, as ever, was that of a hard working, creative and proactive group of people. My experience of other organisations had demonstrated the benefit of professional administration and I knew an excellent professional administrator – Jill Brookes! From 1988 SEDA (then SCED) took the step of charging for membership and thus established paid administration.

Jill started work with SCED from an office at home and went on to establish an excellent team of administrators all of whom have been key participants in SEDA's growth and success.

In 1993 SCED became SEDA when it was joined by the Staff Development Group of SRHE. It had grown from SCEDSIP (Standing Conference on Educational Development Services in Polytechnics), which was established in 1974, to SCED to SEDA. The thirtieth of July 2005 was the last day when Jill Brookes provided an administrative service for SEDA – an organisation with a range of activities including accreditation, publications, books published jointly with Kogan Page and Routledge-Falmer, fellowships, biannual Conferences and one day events. Jill has supported and encouraged numbers of busy SEDA Chairs, Co-Chairs, Committee Chairs and members to develop SEDA's portfolio of work over 17 years. An impressive record of success for an organisation which is run by its voluntary members and maintains a sense of shared values and community.

Over 30 people attended the banquet for Jill, including current members of SEDA Executive, past SEDA Chairs and Committee Chairs and SEDA friends. The evening was organised by James Wisdom and presentations and tributes to Jill were appropriately informal and inclusive. Past SEDA Chairs including Liz Beaty, David Baume, Carole Baume, Hazel Fullerton, Barry Jackson, Kristine Mason O'Connor, and Ranald MacDonald who spoke of Jill's expertise, professionalism and spirit of collaboration and co-operation which have enabled SEDA's growth over the years. Jill has been the secure heart of SEDA giving the confidence and power to take forward developments. Gina Wisker and Julie Hall also spoke of Jill's contribution and emphasised the care Jill has shown to us all.

Jill was presented with the last ever SEDA paper weight, several bouquets of flowers and a folder containing a record of SEDA developments together with 'post-its' which had been written by those at the event and many others who had not been able to attend, including Sally Brown and Phil Race.

I was asked to make the presentation on behalf of SEDA as I had been responsible for introducing Jill to the organisation. I thanked Jill for the enormous contribution she had made both to SEDA and more generally to staff and educational development.

Jill Brookes being thanked by John Peters, Chair of Conference Committee, at the end of the Spring 2005 Joint Conference with AISHE in Belfast.

Looking forward, Jill and her colleagues have worked hard to ensure the effective transition of the SEDA Administration to the ACU.

We all send Jill good wishes for the future and her new home and life in Brighton.

Professor Diana Eastcott is the Director of the Staff and Student Development Department at the University of Central England in Birmingham.

Changes to the Advisory Group

We are pleased to announce that Gwen van der Velden, Chair of the Heads of Educational Development Groups (HEDG), and Professor Bob Thackwray of the Leadership Foundation have accepted our invitation to serve on SEDA's Advisory Group. Dr Liz Elvidge (University of Cambridge) is the Chair. Dr Paul Clark (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning and Teaching, The Open University) and Professor Philip Candy (Director of Learning Strategy and Standards, NHSU) have both agreed to continue to serve. Dr Helen King AFSEDA (GEES Subject Centre, University of Plymouth) has replaced Mike Laycock as the co-opted representative from the SEDA Executive. Professor Caroline Gipps, who was Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Kingston University, has been appointed Vice Chancellor of the University of Wolverhampton, and has resigned from the Group. We congratulate her on her new appointment, and thank her for the very valuable contribution she has made to SEDA.

Supporting New Academic Staff (SNAS): enhanced support for a disciplinary focus

Sue Burkill, University of Plymouth, and Yolande Knight, GEES Subject Centre

The idea behind SNAS

Life as a new academic can be daunting. Of all the challenges faced, finding out about appropriate teaching approaches for your own discipline can be one of the most demanding. There is considerable evidence to suggest that new lecturers prefer to relate to the work of their immediate disciplinary colleagues when deciding how they will teach and assess their students (Jenkins,1996; Healey, 2000; Clarke, 2002; Huber and Morreale, 2002). Partly as a result of this, new lecturers on Post Graduate Certificate courses sometimes feel that too little emphasis is placed on the unique features of teaching and learning in their disciplines. Recently this has been supported by a growing body of research (see summary in Healey and Jenkins, 2003) although the idea is also contested in various ways (Gibbs, 2000; Wareing, 2005; D'Andrea and Gosling, 2005). A lively debate about the validity of these different viewpoints has resulted (for example in workshops at recent SEDA annual conferences). Into this contested area has come Supporting New Academic Staff (the SNAS programme).

A scene from a post graduate certificate tutor's learning set

'A clinical tutor, newly appointed to the University's Medical School, is keen to find out more about the background to the use of Problem Based Learning (PBL) in Medicine and asks for some reference material; an English tutor in the same learning set has no idea what PBL is and would like to hear more and find out whether there is a movement towards PBL in the Humanities.'

An email from a Subject Centre resource officer's postbag

'A new lecturer in Geology is involved in an action research project based on peer assessment; she has lots of references to the generic literature from her course tutor but now needs to find out about the use of peer assessment in Geology.'

The SNAS story so far

SNAS was established in October 2002 with support from the LTSN generic centre (and more recently the Higher Education Academy). The initial aim was simply to collate resources that were written by discipline or subject colleagues and to make them readily available to course participants through a simple searchable database. There was a clear commitment to neutrality; the dichotomised approach to course provision that seemed to be emerging in the literature (D'Andrea and Gosling, 2005) was not the concern of the programme. We aimed to provide easily accessible resources which could equally well be used in generic courses or in courses which were aimed at particular disciplinary groups (see subject centre feedback). SNAS basically provided a context in which subject centres could work with accredited course leaders to create short reference lists for their participants. The group has built itself into a community of practice which has met about twice a year for the last three years to:

- discuss and debate the themes/ topics that are covered by most new lecturer programmes;
- decide which resource lists should be included in the database (including themes that are universal such as course design and assessment and those which are unique to the discipline);
- design approaches for using the resources with participants;
- trial the use of the resources with participants and write up case studies of the trials;
- agree on approaches and principles for maintaining/updating the resource database.

The outcomes are available at http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/snas and include the database and some research outcomes. A short questionnaire is provided to encourage course providers to reflect on the disciplinary elements of their courses; case studies of how the database is being used are included to help embed the use of the database in programmes.

One interesting and rather unexpected outcome of SNAS has been the closer understanding that has emerged between subject centres and course leaders about their respective roles and responsibilities in the educational development arena.

Feedback from new member of staff

'The added value of the database is the succinct number of resources per topic in each discipline, and the subject centre's annotation which highlights the resources' usefulness.'

Feedback from course tutors

'The resources are a key link in our programme for bridging a potentially demotivating conceptual gap between subject specific and generic.'

'We hope that the early use of the SNAS database will mean that participants are familiar with the literature and scholarship that underpins the teaching of their discipline in higher education.'

Feedback from Subject Centre

'The Academy Subject Centre for Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences (GEES SC) runs an annual two day workshop on all aspects of learning and teaching for New Academic Staff

within its subject community. An annotated list of resources is provided for participants to take home with them at the end of the two days. It therefore makes sense for this 'value-added' resource list to be utilised by the SNAS project. The GEES team is currently working on incorporating use of the SNAS database into the workshop. This will provide access to a database that makes available information covering not only GEES-specific and generic resources, but also learning and teaching resources from all other subjects: a necessity considering the interdisciplinary nature of the GEES subjects.'

What next for SNAS?

During 2005-06 SNAS will be funded by the Higher Education Academy and it is expanding its range of activities. The programme will continue to be guided by a reference group but the activity is being taken forward through a planning group consisting of recognised champions in their particular fields. There will be three major strands of activity:

- **Strand One** will maintain the quality and increase the range of discipline-specific resources and guidance available through SNAS. The database will be developed and new topics will be added.
- **Strand Two** will develop an online forum to provide a community of practice for new staff to address and share issues of subject-specific pedagogy.
- **Strand Three** will develop discipline-based resources for linking teaching and disciplinary research. Initially the strand will focus on a small number of courses and subject centres in developing examples of interesting practice in integrating disciplinary research into teaching.

While there will still be a focus on new academic staff, the intention is to expand the focus of the project to include those who are involved in learning and teaching in a support role and anyone interested in continuing their professional development. The SNAS community is expanding as it takes on these new roles and is always pleased to include additional members. If you would like to be included in the mailing list please contact the Project Officer (SNAS) or Allan Davies at the Higher Education Academy.

Sources

The SNAS database can be found at **http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/snas.**

References

Clarke, G. *et al.* (2002) 'Developing New Lecturers: the case of a discipline based workshop', *Active Learning in Higher Education,* 3 (2): 128-144.

D'Andrea, V. and Gosling, D. (2005) *Improving Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (pp 59-63), Maidenhead, McGraw Hill Press/Open University Press and The Society for Research into Higher Education.

Gibbs, G. (2000) 'Are the pedagogies of the discipline really different?', in Rust, C. (ed) *Improving Student Learning: Improving Student Learning Through the Disciplines* (pp.41-51), Proceedings of the 1999 7th International Symposium, Oxford, Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development, Oxford Brookes University.

Healey, M. (2000) 'Developing the Scholarship of Teaching in Higher Education: a discipline-based approach', *Higher Education Research and Development,* 19 (2): 169-187.

Healey, M. and Jenkins, A. (2003) 'Educational Development through the Disciplines', pp 47-57, in Macdonald, R. and Eggins, H. (eds) *The Scholarship of Academic Development,* Maidenhead, Open University Press and The Society for Research into Higher Education.

Huber, M.T. and Morreale, S. (2002) *Disciplinary Styles in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: exploring common ground,* American Association for Higher Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Jenkins, A. (1996) 'Discipline-based Educational Development', *International Journal for Academic Development,* 1 (1): 50-62.

Wareing, S. (2005) 'Discipline-specific Professional Development: just branding?' *Educational Developments,* 6 (1) 11-15

Sue Burkill is the Head of Educational Development at the University of Plymouth. She worked with the LTSN as an associate with responsibility for SNAS between 2003-2005. She is now one of the planning team taking forward the project for the HEA.

Yolande Knight is resource co-ordinator at the HEA GEES Subject Centre. She has been involved in SNAS since 2003 and is now a member of the planning team taking forward the project for the HEA.

Copyright

Copyright for all published material is held by SEDA unless stated otherwise.

Contributors may use their material elsewhere after publication without permission, but the following note should be added: "First published in Educational Developments, issue number and date". Permission is required for use by a third party.

The publishers have endeavoured to find the copyright holders of all material in this magazine. If we have infringed copyright, we shall be pleased, on being satisfied as to the owner's title, to pay an appropriate fee as if prior permission had been obtained.

Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy in all published material. However, the Editorial Committee and the publishers cannot accept any liability for any inaccuracy accepted in good faith from reputable sources.

Any opinions expressed are those of the authors.

Training graduate students to teach: an effective model

Emma Williams and **Liz Elvidge,** University of Cambridge

This article explores the practical implementation and discusses the effectiveness of the training scheme for graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) at the University of Cambridge. It presents our solution to providing training for a high-level tutorial teaching role which has been adapted successfully to other forms of teaching (seminars, classes and lectures) and transferable skills provision. We address issues surrounding generic, centrally offered provision versus bespoke departmental training and development, trainer credibility and evaluation. This programme has so far reached over 1400 graduate students in three years: an investment in both current and future HE teaching.

Introduction

Graduate students at the University of Cambridge are employed in a variety of teaching roles: supervising, demonstrating laboratory experiments, running seminars/ classes and lecturing. Traditionally there has been little support for such student teachers; an expectation to 'get on with it' has been the norm. Despite these factors, GTAs are often eager to teach and can be very influential on the learning of the undergraduates in their care. Over the past three years our programme has provided teaching skills training directed at GTAs .

The majority of our training courses focus on preparing GTAs to provide supervisions. This weekly meeting consists of a group of one to three students and one teacher lasting one hour for each course an undergraduate undertakes. This small group teaching scenario can be extremely daunting for graduate students, especially as supervisors are expected to develop their own style and control the content of the supervisions. There is no set teaching 'recipe' to follow, especially in the arts where discursive supervisions are the norm. This very small group teaching can place great strains on the supervisor necessitating a very steep learning curve. Our experiences can be set against the models of GTA development outlined by Sprague and Nyquist (1989) and expanded on by Nyquist and Wulff (1996), allowing a model from North America to be transferred to a British, if not international, setting. They outline three distinct phases as a GTA matures (a senior learner, a colleague-in-training and a junior colleague) and highlight behaviours which are characteristic of each phase. The Cambridge supervision system asks GTAs to take on a role which would fit into the description of a junior colleague (designing and teaching a course).

When training we canvass the concerns of the graduate students about their teaching role. These can be used to inform us as to the particular stage a GTA has reached in their development as a teacher and can be grouped into two areas. The first reflect the middle stage of teaching development (colleague-in-training):

- Getting students to participate
- Understanding what they should be teaching and how
- Being asked questions from bright students
- Balancing teaching with their research
- Marking and assessing work.

The second are very much the concerns of a 'senior learner':

- Being very close in age to the students they are teaching
- Gaining their students' respect
- Imposing boundaries on friendships
- Teaching material they have only just finished studying themselves
- Managing their time
- Teaching whilst they are learning how to conduct research
- Assessing how much teaching to take on
- 'How will teaching help me obtain my first post doctoral position?'

These findings agree with those ascribed to GTAs in a British context (Goodlad, 1997; Gallinat, 2003) and those in a North American setting (Prieto, 2003; Nyquist & Wulff, 1996). We have developed our content to address as many of these concerns as possible.

The challenge then, for us as developers, has been to take GTAs who are at the starting end of the teaching model and prepare them for a role which one might expect to be performed by a more mature teacher. Our choices of programme content, location (within the University) and trainers have proved key to the success of this scheme.

The training programme

Our existing training model was based on materials written at the University of East Anglia (Goodall and Elvidge, 1999) for science graduate students. The course modules were designed to be highly participative, use a variety of learning tools (discussion in small groups and in a plenary format, video clips, creation of posters, using 'real' essays). We retained the modular structure but adjusted timing so that the courses could fit in one day. This training programme was also presented in a very accessible way for trainers, allowing them to facilitate sessions easily through a series of prompts and cues if necessary. Given our model of using a network of trainers from across the University we wished to keep this format.

The material has been tailored for the teaching environment at Cambridge and extended to cover the arts and humanities. Explaining terminology and making sure everyone understands the different teaching roles are key

elements to the success of the training: many of our graduate students come from other Universities both in the UK and abroad. An explanation of our teaching system is given at the start of the day to give GTAs an understanding of their prospective roles so that the activities of the remainder of the day have a clear focus. One cannot expect them to know what a 'good' supervisor is until they know what one does. A typical course outline would include the following elements:

- Canvassing their concerns
- Explaining teaching at Cambridge (roles and responsibilities)
- Reviewing what makes a good teacher (using past experience and seeing video clips of 'real' supervisions)
- Exploring basic teaching skills (participation, setting ground rules, feedback)
- Advice on assessing and marking work
- Dealing with common problems
- Strategies for non-native English speakers
- Wrap up and evaluation.

The timing of the courses varies throughout the academic year. Ideally we would like to be able to train GTAs immediately prior to them embarking on the teaching process, so that skills and ideas learnt could be put into practice straight away: using a 'just in time' approach. Our general, centrally administered courses are run throughout the academic year with the intention that people can sign up for them when they need the training. Departments, however, often run supervising courses in June/July or September/October, readying prospective teachers for the new academic year. Our programme is at its busiest in October. The programme is centrally developed and administered by two part-time staff developers, who were originally part of the trainer pool (see later).

Generic vs. bespoke programmes

The evolution of the scheme has demanded we address the differences between training courses aimed at a general population of graduate students and those tailored to the specific needs of a Faculty, School or Department. At its inception the scheme provided general courses but has moved towards a more bespoke model for two reasons. The first is that students were asking for more specific provision. This may also indicate their 'senior learner' status: they find it hard to relate generic teaching concepts to their immediate needs as GTAs. The second is driven from Departments who wish to improve the quality of their teaching, possibly in the light of specific feedback. In 2004/5 we offered 18 events throughout the year which are centrally administered by Staff Development which are open to any graduate student from across the University. A further 30 events are run in response to a particular section of the University (Faculty, School or Department).

Key elements of generic courses are:

- Mixture of science and arts materials to investigate the various roles of the graduate teacher
- Exposure to different teaching ideas and concepts that may be rarely used in their subject
- Hosted in 'neutral' conference facilities.

Key elements of bespoke courses are:

- Designed after an initial meeting with the department e.g. to address a perceived problem (participation, marking work, non-native English speakers)
- Exploring past essays or question sheets which have been marked by an experienced staff member (for practise marking and feedback).
- Member of department available to discuss any issues raised during assessment
- Hosted in department where possible
- Departmental staff present to explain departmental teaching and also after assessment exercise but absent rest of day to allow GTAs to talk freely
- Students can form informal support networks.

Our experience has shown that GTAs perceive the bespoke courses as much more 'useful' and 'relevant' and attendance figures are higher for these events. Departments also feel they have more control over these events and these can be used in QAA reviews. Starting with an introduction from a senior member of the department can be invaluable in setting the 'seal of approval' on 'outsiders' acting as facilitators for the event.

The trainers

The credibility of trainers for these events is paramount to our programme's success. Graduates want the session facilitators to be 'experts' who can share their own relevant experiences of teaching and research. Faculties and Departments have been traditionally suspicious of staff development and are encouraged that training will be given by trainers who were or are academic members of the University staff. Thus the skills and experiences we seek in our trainers are:

- An understanding of graduate student life
- Familiarity with teaching in a collegiate system
- Experience of working in research
- Good communication skills
- An interest in improving teaching at our institution
- A willingness to learn training techniques
- A flexibility to work for us 2-3 days a term.

To date, three cohorts of 12 trainers have attended a one week training course. The course's aims are to introduce key teaching concepts, to model best practice in small group work and above all to build the confidence of the trainers. New trainers are encouraged to observe and participate in events with more experienced trainers as soon as possible. Performances are monitored by the scheme co-ordinators through observation and trainer/participant feedback. Communication is key to keeping the network of trainers working effectively. Organisation of training events, provision of course material and briefing documents, feedback before and after a course and disseminating new material and ideas are done whenever possible via email. By consulting our trainers over developments we hope to foster a sense of ownership, which should help them and their students engage with the course material. In addition, termly meetings provide the network with development opportunities. One downside of employing such trainers, however, is that many are post doctoral researchers on short term contracts and as such may leave Cambridge, which demands a rolling programme of trainer recruitment and preparation.

Evaluation of the programme

Evaluation of teaching and measuring the impact of any one experience on the quality of teaching is notoriously difficult. In Cambridge this is compounded by the complexity of the supervision system where it is difficult to track the undergraduates who have been taught by the GTAs we have trained. Our evaluation strategy has two major parts. The first is an immediate, reflective process using the participants' evaluation sheets. This information is fed back to the trainers and departments concerned. These, along with the students' concerns, are also summarised and used when preparing the next course of this type. In the main our feedback is extremely positive and the links between what the participants report as most useful correlate well with their previously expressed concerns. In addition graduates value meeting and discussing their concerns with their peers. Using this method our courses are constantly evolving: we now hold a suite of courses which stem from the same generic background but vary considerably both in content and approach for different settings.

The second strategy aimed to review the perceptions of both participants and departments after the participants have had substantive opportunity to teach. Departments and colleges were written to for their comments. The replies have been positive and in two cases stated that ratings for the teaching given by GTAs had improved considerably following the introduction of training. There was strong support that such a scheme should be continued. Eliciting information from past participants was much harder. Our attempts to run focus groups or an email based questionnaire fell on stony ground. However, emailing all past participants (allowing for a minimum time to teach of six months) with the address of an online survey and the chance to be entered into a draw for a book token gave a response rate of 12.1%. We used the BOS Toolkit for this process (http://www.survey.bris.ac.uk/index.html). 83.1% of respondents claimed improved confidence as a teacher (66% had not taught in a university before). We were interested in how effective we had been in fostering the idea of reflective practice. The comments below were taken from responses to the question 'How do you hope to improve your teaching in the future?'

> *"Greater practice, and feedback from students and other supervisors. More specific courses at a more developed level would be helpful though - after some time, my personal style has undoubtedly changed, and it would be good to have a chance to review it."*
>
> *"Soliciting informal feedback from students, continued practice, continuous revision of teaching materials."*

The future

The evolution of our programme and its evaluation has pointed the way for our development quite clearly. Our future goals include:

- Increasing our liaison with departments, working in concert with them to help GTAs
- Working with those who employ GTAs to improve communication and recognition for the work they do
- Encouraging research supervisors to appreciate the transferability and relevance of the skills developed by those graduate students who teach
- Encompassing our provision for graduate student teachers within both the Robert's agenda and the wider field of 'continuing academic practice': providing 'joined-up development'.

Conclusions

We have presented a model of a very effective and successful training scheme to enable GTAs to perform demanding teaching duties. This model has been adapted within our own institution to a variety of teaching contexts (seminars, classes, lectures and practicals) in departments across the University. This has been executed on funding from the TQEF and the HR strategy HEFCE of just £48K to pay for two part time staff and the trainers' fees. The key principles of modular design, meeting the GTAs' needs and using academically credible trainers have been central to its uptake and success but are aspects which are transferable to a range of other institutional settings.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the large contributions of Dr Jenny McCann and Dr Anna Gannon to this scheme.

References

Gallinat, A. (2003) *'Only if they pay me… ideals and pragmatics of post-graduates who teach'*, http://www.anthropologymatters.com/journal/2003-1/gallinat2003_onlyif.htm, retrieved 8 November 2004.

Goodall, R. and Elvidge, E. (1999) *Developing Postgraduates' Teaching Skills in the Sciences,* Norwich, Centre for Staff and Educational Development.

Goodlad, S. (1997) 'Responding to the Perceived Training Needs of Graduate Teaching Assistants', *Studies in Higher Education,* 22, 83-92.

Nyquist, J., and Wulff, D. (1996) *Working effectively with graduate assistants,* London, Sage.

Park, C. (2002) 'Neither fish nor fowl? The perceived benefits and problems of using Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) to teach undergraduate students', *Higher Education Review,* 35, 50-62.

Park, C. (2004) 'The graduate teaching assistant (GTA): lessons from North American experience', *Teaching in Higher Education,* 9, 349-361.

Prieto, L. (2003) 'Teaching assistant development: research and impressions', in Buskist, W., Hevern, V. and Hill, W., IV, (eds) *Essays from e-xcellence in teaching,* 2002, Chapter 1, Society for the Teaching of Psychology web site: http://teachpsych.lemoyne.edu/teachpsych/eit/index.html, retrieved January 2005.

Sprague, J., and Nyquist, J. D. (1989) 'TA supervision', in Nyquist, J. D., Abbott, R. D., and Wulff, D. H. (eds), *Teaching assistant training in the 1990s,* 37-53, San Francisco, CA, Jossey-Bass.

Emma Williams is a University Teaching Assistant at the University of Cambridge.

Dr Liz Elvidge is the Academic Staff Development Officer at the University of Cambridge.

Engaging with Informal Networks in Higher Education

Roger Ottewill, Paul Riddy and **Karen Fill,** University of Southampton

Introduction

In recent years academics have been able to take advantage of a rapidly expanding range of informal networking opportunities in cyberspace. These serve to complement the important contribution of formally organised national and international networks to the diffusion of innovation and ideas in higher education (Ottewill *et al.,* 2005). There is, of course, no precise boundary between informal and formal networking. For example, at some point, the members of an informal network might decide to move towards greater formality by holding face-to-face symposia, workshops or conferences and launching a paper based journal. Conversely, formal networks might spawn informal groupings of members pursuing interests independently.

This article is mainly concerned with informal networking where the sole, or principal, mode of communication is electronic. Although many current and prospective electronic communication technologies are multi-functional, here the focus is very much on their role in facilitating informal networking amongst academics. The aim is to illustrate the different types of informal network and to indicate some of their benefits and drawbacks, with a view to informing how educational developers might engage with them.

Types of informal networking

Listservers enable members to send and receive emails to and from everyone else on the list, thus significantly extending the potential for communication. Membership can be open to anyone or restricted to a particular group, such as faculty or those belonging to a professional association. In April 2005, a search of some 44,000 public lists using the key words "higher, education, learning, teaching" yielded 1,425 hits (CataList 2005). The UK's Joint Information Systems Committee hosts over 4,000 lists covering topics such as problem based learning, action research, external examining and academic skill development (JISCmail, 2005).

Discussion groups, including newsgroups and forums, facilitate asynchronous dialogue and access to discussion threads, both current and archived. For example, UNFOLD (2004) focuses on aspects of e-learning implementation and hosts discussion forums associated with three 'communities of practice': system developers, learning designers and teachers. Registration is required to be an active participant in the discussions.

Chat rooms also support dialogue, but synchronously rather than asynchronously. Our preliminary research suggests that public chat rooms are not widely used by academics in the UK for networking. To date, chat is more likely to be internal: course, student or project focused. Chat rooms linked to online publications, requiring registration, have greater potential. One example is Innovate (2004), an online journal covering the creative use of information technology (IT) to enhance educational processes in all sectors. A range of communication tools, including chat and sophisticated file sharing facilities, are integrated within the journal. Only time will tell if it is more successful in generating and sustaining lively and creative 'academic chat' than other facilities. In our experience, chat sessions quickly lose coherence as the number of participants increases. Mediation via a chairperson can also be difficult. There are also broader questions regarding the provision, and potential misuse, of open access rooms for online communication.

Videoconferencing (VC) is currently moving from being a specialist domain to becoming more pervasive with tools, like Microsoft Messenger. These incorporate a VC option as well as the ability to switch between many individuals. In our experience, the visual connection makes communication seem more authentic. JISC has set up a pilot self booking service for HE, potentially making on-demand visual networking available (JISC CoD, 2005). However, communication between networks can be problematic, especially with respect to institutional firewalls. As technological hurdles are overcome, it is possible that VC will become increasingly important in networking educational developers with those working in fields where there is a strong visual dimension, such art, drama, sport and environmental studies.

As mobile technologies such as phones and personal digital assistants merge, acquire wireless capability and offer high-speed web-access from more locations, so informal networking will become less restricted by the constraints of the desktop. For example, mobile technologies can be used to capture *in situ* artefacts or phenomena during archaeological excavations or geographical field trips. This information could be immediately shared with networked colleagues in order to seek immediate comment, advice or second opinions.

Benefits and drawbacks

Clearly any engagement with the networking opportunities surveyed above involves an investment of time and energy. Is this well spent? Enthusiasts point to the contribution that informal networking between academics can make to different facets of educational development. For example, it enables the fostering and maintenance of relationships to an extent that may not be feasible by any other means.

Another contribution is peer support, or mentoring. For novices, good examples include Maths-New-Lecturers (2002) and the Australasian Peer Support Network for New Academics in Engineering, which provides 'access to mentors at institutions throughout the country, and … advice from gurus in the field about what works for them in their teaching' (PSN, 2004).

Peer support can be equally beneficial to experienced practitioners. Within the rapidly changing world of HE, the value of virtual solidarity with others in a similar position is considerable. Electronically mediated peer support can re-motivate academics who are experiencing difficulties in their teaching. As Hilsdon (2004) states, with respect to the Learner Development in Higher Education Network, 'professional isolation and geographical distance need no longer prevent practitioners from sharing information and views, from developing forms of mutual support, and evolving structures to carry forward our contribution to the development of HE across (as well as within) individual institutions'.

A further contribution is information exchange. This can be particularly valuable where the field is highly specialised and/or practitioners are widely dispersed. As the Japanese scholars who established the Cetacean Zooarchaeology Research Network proclaimed, 'because cetacean remains occur in widely different geographical and cultural contexts, individual researchers may often be unaware of relevant studies … that address problems similar to theirs, problems that, in many instances, are unique to cetacean zooarchaeology. Accordingly, we feel the establishment of an informal network would be beneficial in that it would promote and facilitate scientific exchange' (CETARCH, 2004).

Related to this, informal networks can break down barriers to the free movement of ideas and encourage more inclusive development of communities of practice. Some commentators assert that internet discussion groups erode 'social barriers between central and peripheral scientists and thereby increase the size of *invisible colleges'*, (Matzat, 1998). Clearly it is important for educational developers to be both aware of these initiatives and participate in them to the extent that they have implications for learning, teaching and assessment.

For many informal networks, a key aim is enhancing cross-national understanding and supporting international initiatives. A good example is Transeuropéennes which, since 1993, 'has developed in the European Union, in the Mediterranean area and the Balkans an informal network of actors from the cultural, academic and non-governmental sectors …(aimed) both at creating an informal Euro-Mediterranean space for cooperation and interaction and at developing and reinforcing innovative networks involved in the ongoing democratisation processes in the Balkans' (Transeuropéennes, 2004).

Critics, however, might argue that these claimed benefits to academia are overstated. For example, Thomson (2003) argues that the Internet has 'not caused a radical reorganisation of our society or changed our essential human nature' and is critical of the apparent 'lack of awareness' of current and previous research into human communications in contributions to online discussions. In his view, this leads to 'intellectually shallow' debate. Indeed, the absence of controls increases the likelihood of wasting time accessing material of dubious relevance. Based on empirical research, Matzat (2001) concluded that informal networks vary considerably in their value and that there is 'more evidence for contact benefits than for information benefits'. In other words, they are only a necessary, not a sufficient, condition for fostering beneficial communication. Moreover, even where content is of good quality, informal networking can increase information overload.

There are also concerns that the limited availability of advanced communications technologies in some parts of the world 'will lead to the progressive exclusion of [academics] in these countries from the collective international discourse that is essential for making progress in new knowledge production' (Arunachalam, 1998). Such concern applies as much to broader educational development issues as it does to more narrowly focused disciplinary ones.

Conclusion

While the proliferation of informal networking opportunities is extending the boundaries within which professional identities are developed and information is exchanged, this trend is by no means unproblematic. Given that time is finite, only the 'fittest' networks may survive.

Educational developers have a challenging role in assessing the viability of networking opportunities, helping new and established academics keep abreast of developments and advising on the most productive approaches to informal networking. They also need to engage with the types of network mentioned earlier in order to ensure that the educational development voice and perspective is injected into the debates they generate. In this way informal networking enables developers to keep 'an electronic ear to the ground'.

References

Arunachalam, S. (1998) *Information technology and scholarly communication in developing countries,* http://thenode.org/networking/november1998 / feature2.html, accessed 26 April 2005.

CataList (2005) Home Page, http://www.lsoft.com/lists/listref.html, accessed 26 April 2005.

CETARCH (2004) Home Page, http://www.kanazawa-med.ac.jp/~hum-sci/cetarch.htm, accessed 26 April 2005.

Hilsdon, J. (2004) 'Learning Development in Higher Education Network (LDHEN) – an Emerging Community of Practice?', *Educational Developments,* 5 (3), 12-15.

Innovate (2004) Home Page, Journal of Online Education, http://www.uliveandlearn.com/innovate/index.cfm, accessed 26 April 2005.

JISCmail (2005) Home Page, http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/, accessed 22 April 2005.

JISC CoD (2005) Home Page, http://www.jvcs.ja.net/cod/, accessed 22 April 2005.

Maths-New-Lecturers (2002), http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/Maths-New-Lecturers.html, accessed 26 April 2005.

Matzat, U. (1998) *Informal Academic Communication and Scientific Usage of Internet Discussion Groups,* http://www.sosig.ac.uk/iriss/papers/paper19.htm, accessed 26 April 2005.

Matzat, U. (2001), *Social Networks and Cooperation in Electronic Communities. A theoretical-empirical Analysis of Academic Communication and Internet Discussion Groups,* Amsterdam, Thela Publisher, Home Page, http://www.ub.rug.nl/ eldoc/dis/ppsw/u.matzat/, accessed 26 April 2005.

Ottewill, R., Riddy, P., and Fill, K. (2005) *International Networks in Higher Education: realising their potential?* On the Horizon, in press.

PSN (2004) *Peer Support Network for New Academics in Engineering,* http://www.aaee.com.au/networks/psn/, accessed 26 April 2005.

Thomson, B. (2003) *A little less conversation,* BBC News World Edition, 30 May 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/2949588.stm, accessed 26 April 2005.

Transeuropéennes (2004) Home Page, http://transeuropeennes.gaya.fr /uk/transeuropeennes/reseaux.html, accessed 9 August 2004.

UNFOLD (2004) Home Page, http://www.unfold-project.net:8085 / UNFOLD/, accessed 26 April 2005.

Roger Ottewill and **Karen Fill** are Research Assistants and **Paul Riddy** is an Educational Developer (Technology) at the Centre for Learning and Teaching at the University of Southampton.

Staff and Educational Development Association

Response to the Higher Education Academy's Consultation Paper: 'A Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Student Learning'

The Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) was formed in 1993 as the professional association for staff and educational developers in the UK, promoting innovation and good practice in higher education. Our membership is highly experienced in the design and development, assessment (including external examining) and accreditation of programmes in learning and teaching for higher education, in developing and providing continuing professional development opportunities, and in institutional planning for strategic development.

Consultation Question 1: Is the purpose and rationale for the proposed framework acceptable to your organisation?

1. SEDA is committed to the value of professional development for teachers in higher education, and believes in the importance of nationally shared standards for professional development and practice.

2. We are pleased to see that underpinning professional values remain an integral part of the framework. These have been an important and effective element in professional standards for higher education teachers since 1992, and they contribute substantially to the Academy's goals of combining inclusivity and flexibility (3.3) with creativity, innovation and continuous development (4.1), and consistency and quality (4.1). It is reassuring to see continued emphasis on underpinning professional knowledge. This confirms teaching in higher education as a scholarly and professional activity, rooted in research rather than simply in experience.

3. We welcome the continuity with the earlier ILTHE framework of the five areas of work. The higher education sector has become familiar with these five areas in the last few years. It is therefore helpful to promoting teaching and learning in the sector that the Academy has retained what is widely seen as an effective structure and division of activity.

4. We appreciate that developing a national standards framework for teaching and supporting student learning in higher education is an important and complex task, and one that the Higher Education Academy is concerned to get right. Although we recognize the wish to move ahead with the framework, the current proposal is not yet suitable for implementation; it will not deliver the aims which the consultation document presents in paragraph 4.1. Level one and level three do not map onto higher education institution structures, policies and practices, and these two areas in particular will require some revision. We explain our concerns with the proposal in more detail below.

Consultation Question 2: Are the statements of standards and the related areas of activity acceptable and workable as a common reference point for all institutions? Do they

enable institutions to add criteria to reflect your particular aims and learning outcomes?

5. There needs to be flexibility in the quantity and combination of requirements to be met at level one, to address the rich diversity of roles and staff contributing to the student learning experience in UK higher education. There is a lack of inclusivity in the present framework, which insufficiently recognises the diversity of teaching staff, in terms of roles and responsibilities, and entry points into higher education teaching. Specific examples of this are given below in paragraphs 6-7, and in paragraph 13.

6. We are concerned about the proposed requirement at level 1 to demonstrate all five areas of work. While we agree that evaluation of practice and continuing professional development should be required at all levels, the sector employs many teachers who do not work in all four remaining areas, but nevertheless perform important and effective roles. The framework at present will either exclude from professional recognition people who make a significant contribution to student learning, or will lead to areas such as assessment being fudged. We would prefer to see flexibility in the quantity of areas of core knowledge required, for the same reason (as was the case under the previous ILTHE guidelines).

7. Disciplines that recruit new (full-time and part-time) teachers who are experienced, mature practitioners in fields outside education (e.g. in clinical and health related disciplines) may feel that the expectations of level 1 are particularly at odds with their professional experiences, which enable them to operate at a sophisticated conceptual level immediately.

8. We are also concerned about the description of level 1: 'Demonstrates scholarly performance and a developing awareness of the student learning experience…' (our emphasis).

9. We question what is meant by the term 'performance', in relation to the five areas of activity. 'Performance' clearly maps onto lecturing but it is less clear what the term means in the context of designing and planning learning activities, supporting student learning, designing assessment, giving feedback, developing effective environments and student guidance and support systems, and evaluation of practice. It is therefore unclear how helpful the word 'performance' is when considered in the light of all five areas of activity. This difficulty is magnified in the context of the core knowledge and professional values.

10. Awareness is an unexpected term to find in a description of a standard, because of its subjectivity, and the difficulties of demonstrating a cognitive state, and indeed teaching or assessing it with reliability. Developing presents similar difficulties: a standard which states that someone has entered a process of cognitive change will be very difficult to measure, to assess, and to 'quality assure'. In order to meet the earlier stated purpose of 'supporting consistency and quality of the student learning experience' (4.1) we suggest that this level description is revised.

11. There are no citations given in the text to substantiate the claim that these proposals are informed by recent research (5.3). Research into student learning and professional development is a complex field which emerges from many different disciplinary traditions. It would be helpful to know which particular work the framework draws on.

Consultation Question 3: Could the proposed framework be implemented within institutional CPD policies and practices?

12. We would welcome revision of the third level, which we do not consider to map onto the career patterns of academic staff. The current proposal implies that the highest level of teaching is managing and leading teaching, but does not at present recognise there must also be scope for teachers to continue to improve **as teachers,** whether through specialising or simply by continuing to improve, e.g. towards teaching-based promotions, or institutional (or national) fellowships. The current proposed account of the top level of teaching as managing or leading teaching does not fit well with the proposals on CPD also published by the Academy, which allow continuing development and improvement in one's current role throughout a career. We would warmly welcome a third level which describes both continuing to improve as a teacher, and managing and leading teaching, and suggest this would enable the framework to be far more effectively assimilated into institutional CPD policies and practices.

13. Furthermore, we are concerned about the appropriateness of level three for the career progression of staff who support student learning but are not necessarily on academic contracts. As the consultation document title specifies 'supporting student learning' we assume that it is intended to cover the professional development of staff such as technicians, librarians, learning technologists, learning support staff who may contribute substantially and directly to student learning. CPD opportunities are also important to these staff, but many will not have opportunities to lead and manage learning and teaching.

14. We would also encourage there to be explicit mention of the importance of research-led, or research-informed teaching, incorporating the concepts of research into disciplinary areas, research into pedagogy, and research into higher education.

15. We recognise that there is mention of scholarship in the values, but would welcome further explanation of whether the sixth proposed value (8.4, p5) 'Commitment to incorporating the process and outcomes of relevant

continued on page 23 . . .

Editorial

Steve Outram, Higher Education Academy

These are heady days for educational developers and one of the privileges of editing *Educational Developments* (yes, there are privileges!) is to get a glimpse of what is coming. In this edition, Lorraine Stefani describes the findings from a research project identifying the impact that academic development has. An important conclusion is the need for higher education institutions to recognise and support the research activity of their academic and educational development units. This invitation to widen our scope of practice is echoed by Kerry Shephard, who describes the significance for educational developers of engaging with sustainable development.

Supporting learning and teaching development remains a central activity and Emma Williams and Liz Elvidge describe the successful GTA support scheme that has been introduced at Cambridge University. Of course, the identification of professional standards and their introduction continues to develop - the SEDA response to the Higher Education Academy led consultation can be found on page 21. An important way in which the Higher Education Academy supports new tutors is through SNAS and in this edition Sue Burkill and Yolande Knight describe what SNAS is all about. Also in this edition, Roger Ottewill, Paul Riddy and Karen Fill describe the importance of engaging with networks in higher education and last, but definitely not least, Sue Thompson and Martyn Stewart follow-up their earlier account of introducing their dissemination strategy successfully with how they also introduced an engagement strategy. Their final comment might be used to complete this edition –

Time to re-invent ourselves?

. . . *continued from page 22*

research and scholarship' is a different value from the first value identified, 'Commitment to scholarship in teaching' or whether it replaces it. This clarification would be helpful for institutions wishing to align policies and practice with the Academy's framework. We realise there is ambiguity in the terminology associated with this area, and many of the concepts identified in this paragraph and paragraph 13 overlap; the standards framework is an ideal opportunity to underline the importance of all these overlapping areas in unambiguous language.

16. In the context of Etienne Wenger's work on communities of practice (E. Wenger, 1998, Communities of Practice, Cambridge University Press), we would welcome explicit emphasis in the framework on the importance of collaboration. On an individual level, collaboration provides support. At an institutional level, Wenger's thesis is that organisational change only occurs through communities of practice. 'Creativity, innovation and continuous development' (4.1, consultation document) are only achieved collectively, and therefore we suggest more emphasis on this aspect of professional development.

17. The implementation of the framework will depend on nationally agreed assessment processes, but there is no mention of assessment and accreditation processes in this document, and in particular, how institutions could be expected to map the framework into their own validation processes. This omission is remarkable in the context of 166 higher education teaching programmes accredited by the Academy. We welcome the reference under the heading 'Relationship to the current accreditation framework' at level 2, to postgraduate certificate programmes as the normal qualification (p4 consultation document), because it confirms widespread existing standards.

18. We note that there is potential ambiguity in the examples of staff groups who might take programmes at level 1 and level 2. The examples given suggest that staff with full academic posts, but who are new to HE, would take programmes at level 1. As we have indicated above, the difference between staff on programmes leading to associate practitioner status and to registered practitioner status has been based on the breadth of responsibilities, not length of service. New members of academic staff, whatever their previous experience, have quality assurance and enhancement responsibilities, are frequently involved in course design (including assessment design), and have extensive legislative responsibilities (under human rights legislation, and the data protection and freedom of information acts). We would not wish the extent to which these staff are prepared for their roles to be compromised by their taking only level one programmes. It is possible we have misinterpreted the standards framework in this respect but we would welcome clarification on this point.

19. The staff and educational development community looks forward to continuing to help develop, assure and increase the quality of teaching and the supporting learning in higher education. SEDA looks forward to working with the Academy to devise and implement ways to help those running qualification courses in higher education teaching to implement the new Academy standards and CPD framework.

Shân Wareing and **James Wisdom,** SEDA Co-Chairs on behalf of the Staff and Educational Development Association, 19th October 2005

Professional development in leading and managing educational change

Peter Kahn FSEDA, University of Manchester

Posts for educational developers seem to have mushroomed in recent years and months. The Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning have provided the latest round of opportunities, but there is plenty of other work available on projects, within development units or subject centres, and on change initiatives related to e-learning, widening participation and so on.

SEDA is thus aware that there is a significant need for the professional development of staff who lead and manage educational change, or who direct their colleagues in this process. You will be aware that two new SEDA-PDF named awards - *Staff and Educational Development* and *Leading Staff and Educational Development* - were approved earlier in the year (see below). SEDA is now considering how best to make these awards available to staff within the sector.

(a) Staff and Educational Development concentrates on supporting developers to carry out cycles of development activity (goal setting, planning, facilitating, monitoring, evaluating and following up) within their particular organisational and strategic contexts. Attention is also paid to professional values and to personal development.

(b) Leading Staff and Educational Development addresses the development of institutional strategy, setting the direction of development activity, and leading assisting colleagues in carrying out development activity; also all within their particular organisational and strategic contexts. Attention is again paid to professional values and to personal development.

Up until now, awards offered through the Professional Development Framework (PDF) have only been offered by institutions. SEDA is now considering offering the two new awards to the sector directly, in addition to the usual routes through accredited programmes within institutions. In particular, the Fellowships Committee is looking to run these two programmes, and to offer eligibility for the Associate Fellowship (and the designation AFSEDA) to those who complete either programme. The proposed programmes would operate with the following characteristics:

- Delivery methods – The programmes will be offered in both face-to-face format (via an established 3-day Summer School, with subsequent mentoring and action learning support) and online format (via a virtual learning environment, using a tried-and-tested approach suited to both the learning outcomes and the target audience)

- Assessment – completion of a portfolio, providing evidence of achievement against the learning outcomes of each award

- Time commitment – equivalent to 30 credits at masters level, with contact hours set at around 25 hours. The programmes will assume activity carried out as part of participants' standard professional practice as a staff and educational developer or leader of staff and educational development

- Anticipated costs for each participant – residential format £1,000; online format £700.

We are also currently seeking support from the Higher Education Academy and the Leadership Foundation in order to develop the two new programmes. The Higher Education Academy is currently conducting a survey to assess likely demand for two national programmes run by SEDA; in due course funding may become available to us. This would also represent a ideal opportunity for SEDA, the Higher Education and the Leadership Foundation to work together on a specific initiative.

Further information on the proposals will be provided in Educational Developments. In the meantime, any individuals or institutions who would welcome further details on the proposed national programmes are welcome to contact the SEDA office.

We are convinced that this is a timely initiative that could significantly help to develop capacity in the sector for the management and leadership of educational change, and also encourage newer staff and educational developers to engage with SEDA. As our sector expands we need to find new ways to support the development constituency.

Peter Kahn is a Senior Professional Development Adviser at the University of Manchester.