Contents

Moving on from Peer Observation of Teaching: a collaborative development utilising the principle of peer-support

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Concerns about Peer Observation of Teaching

Brenda Smith's pioneering 'Sharing Excellence' Project, funded under the first phase of the English Higher Education Funding Council's Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL), established peer observation of teaching as a key indicator of good practice amongst HE professionals. The process is now well embedded within the HE sector.

The former School of Sport and Leisure Management at Sheffield Hallam University was complimented on its use of peer observation in its subject review report in November 2000. However, the problem we faced was that, although peer observation of teaching had been successfully reviewed externally, we knew that it was considerably less well perceived internally. It was therefore necessary to find out why this should be.

The literature offered some clues as to why peer observation might be negatively perceived. There is a clear consensus that peer observation processes are rooted in social theories of learning (Piaget, 1971; O'Donnell, 1999). It was therefore predictable that much would depend on the environment in which peer observation takes place. As Smith (1998) and Pond et al (1995) have pointed out, the rules of engagement for peer observation require the teacher to accept the subordinate role of reviewee whilst a colleague assumes the dominant role of reviewer. These essentially unequal roles are reflected in other models of peer review such as peer mentoring (Triston, 1999). It is possible therefore to predict that difficulties may occur where the roles of reviewee and reviewer are inappropriately aligned or insensitively undertaken. It is also likely that not everyone is as comfortable in the subordinate role of reviewee as they are in their more familiar and dominant role of teacher/lecturer.

Cosh (1998) proposed that the precise purpose(s) of peer review schemes need to be clarified prior to implementation, suggesting that systems based on assessment and appraisal as opposed to reflection and self-development are

likely to lead to generate very different perceptions amongst participants. This is a very telling point for it is clear that systems linked to appraisal will have a greater propensity to unnerve and alienate staff than processes based on self-directed, reflective professional development.

Useful as these literature observations were they did not provide any more than a series of cautionary messages. In order to find out more, it was necessary to ask our own staff to reveal a little more of their concerns. This was done via a series of 'soundings' taken within the eight subject groups to which the eighty or so teaching staff were assigned. The results of these soundings were reported to the School Executive by the subject group leaders. The method of generating the information may not have been inordinately rigorous but the messages were crystal clear. Though levels of criticism varied, even the more positive comments tended to see the process as benign and relatively ineffective in supporting the professional development of staff. The general consensus was that our version of peer observation of teaching was limited in scope, potentially intimidating, relatively easy to subvert, and rarely useful. It was conceded that the process did provide useful 'evidence' for external review/inspection events but that did little to off-set the overwhelmingly negative comments that the process attracted.

Systems based solely on peer observation are limited in the sense that they only allow reviewers to focus on a relatively narrow range of presentation issues. Whilst potentially valuable in generating discussion and development in areas such as session planning, organisation, communication, learning resources and strategies, they are clearly less effective in reviewing the way in which whole modules are planned, delivered and assessed.

A number of subject group leaders relayed instances of staff who found peer observation intimidating, with feelings ranging from mild to extreme. In the most extreme case, a member of staff simply would not engage with the process and there were suspicions that others had also found ways to subvert it. However one might wish to criticise such reactions, it had to be accepted that a process which was generating reactions of this kind was unlikely to be particularly successful in supporting and enhancing professional development. It is reasonable to ask why such negative reactions were not common knowledge or why it wasn't it clear that some staff were not engaged. The answer is that, like many review processes, this one was easy to subvert. It was possible to fill in forms and claim that a process had occurred when in reality it had not. There was no way of telling whether this sort of behaviour was widespread but that was not the central issue. The important conclusion was that a professional development process that intimidated even a few people was likely to be flawed and unlikely to be successful.

Beyond the more lurid tales of non-compliance and subversion, there was an equally worrying and more widespread view that the process rarely resulted in tangible improvements to professional practice. There was much talk of being able to 'put on a show' for one session, the implication being that sessions that were not observed may well have been of significantly lower quality than the ones that were! Reviewer reports were invariably complementary with little evidence of significant or constructively critical professional dialogue. Whilst one could not totally discount the possibility that such reports reflected a desirable, if unlikely reality, in which all eighty staff were achieving high professional standards, this seemed an unlikely proposition. It seemed more likely either that observed sessions were atypical or that reviewers were unwilling to engage in critical reflection on colleagues' professional practice.

The Search for a More Effective Process
Having assured ourselves that the system we were using was not supporting professional development as well as we had hoped, we began to look for a new or modified process that would be more favourably received and which

would generate the kind of developmental engagements that we were seeking. Whatever process we eventually developed had to be valued by colleagues as serving their professional development needs. We needed a process that would allow colleagues to review any aspect of Learning, Teaching and Asessment and which would neither intimidate the reviewee nor discourage the reviewer from engaging in professional dialogue.

It took surprisingly little time to identify that the principle of *peer-support* offered a potential way forward. A seemingly small shift of emphasis from peer observation to peer-support allowed us to develop a new and significantly more successful process.
The principle of peer-support establishes the reviewee's needs as paramount and assigns a supportive and non-judgemental role to the reviewer (Jarzakoowski and Bone, 1998). Coupling these key principles to those that had emerged as a result of our own evaluation of the previous system we were able to devise a new process which to date is proving extremely successful. The following section clarifies the principles embedded in the new process of peer-supported review of learning, teaching and assessment (P-S-R of LTA) and a description of the way in which the system operates.

The Principles Embedded in the New Process of Peer-Supported Review of Learning, Teaching and Assessment

P-S-R of LTA is a reviewee-driven process that provides colleagues with an opportunity to develop their professional practice with the help of a supportive colleague. It is important for the reviewee to commit to the process by thoroughly reviewing their professional practice in order to identify an area that would benefit from an in-depth review and evaluation. It is important that the reviewee:

- is clear about the way in which they wish their review colleague to support them
- can envisage an appropriate review method in consultation with the reviewer.
- appreciates that professional development is an on-going process and that identifying an area for review does not constitute an admission of mediocrity
- is prepared to share concerns about aspects of professional practice which they would like to improve.

There are no barriers in terms of who is able to act as a reviewer. Young and/or inexperienced teachers can often bring new and valued insights to the review process and all reviewers can expect to learn from their involvement as a reviewer. In order that they contribute positively to the process it is important that reviewers appreciate that they;

- are supporting not assessing the reviewee
- allow the reviewee to lead in defining the review methodology and that they suggest rather than assert what will or will not work.

- remember that P-S-R of LTA is not an exercise in trying to get a reviewee to adopt the reviewer's professional attitudes and behaviours.

Though it is not in any sense required, it is conceivable that involving students might add value to some review processes. A student perspective might possibly be helpful as part of reviews focusing on new learning materials, formative or summative assessment and feedback.

To summarise therefore, the important key principles of P-S-R of LTA are that:

- the process serves the perceived needs of the reviewee
- the reviewee is able to focus on any aspect of learning, teaching or assessment
- the review methodology is devised by the reviewee and the reviewer
- reporting requirements are sufficient to allow for constructive dialogue regarding the reviewee's professional development needs
- the reviewee retains control over the way in which the outcomes of the process are reported
- the reviewee retains absolute control over whether or not aspects of their review might be disseminated for the benefit of colleagues

The Operation of the New System

This section describes the operation of the peer-supported review process though it should be emphasised that the details and suggested timescales could be varied to accommodate particular circumstances. An outline of the process including a suggested timeline is shown below. The suggested timeline assumes that the review process extends over a full academic year.

Key Stage	Timeline
Identifying the focus for the review	July to early September
Selecting the reviewer	July to early September
Planning the review process	September
Undertaking the review	September to May as appropriate
Reporting procedures	October and June
Disseminating outcomes	Anytime after the completion of the review
Staff development	The session following the review

Identifying the Focus for the Review: Between the end of one session and beginning of the next, each teaching colleague is required to identify an aspect of their professional practice that they which to review. This coincides with the process of module review and evaluation that is required as part of the University's

quality assurance and enhancement process and it is advised that colleagues use module evaluations and action plans in order to assist them in identifying a focus for the forthcoming review. The focus for a review might centre on a particular module or it might relate more generally to the way in which a teacher organises or supports student learning.

Selecting the Reviewer: Once the focus for the review is established, the reviewee identifies a colleague who they think would be an effective reviewer. It is suggested that a member of staff will normally act as reviewer for no more than two colleagues. There are no further stipulations as to who might act as a reviewer. The expectation is that colleagues will choose a reviewer with whom they can work effectively and who will be able to contribute positively to the process. Advice contained in the supporting handbook includes suggestions that the reviewer might:

- have particular professional or subject expertise.
- provide a new or valued perspectives or insights on a particular issue.
- be familiar with a module on which a particular review is based.

Planning the Review Process: It is expected that the review methodology will be developed by reviewee with assistance from the reviewer. It is important that the reviewee retains control over this aspect of the process and that the reviewer does not attempt to *impose* aspects of the review methodology. The methodology will be determined to a large extent by the focus of the review. There is no requirement to engage in peer observation of teaching though that may be appropriate in some cases.

Undertaking the Review: The review process is undertaken according to the agreed methodology any time between October and May. Reviewees need to take responsibility for ensuring that the planned activities actually take place for experience has shown that, even where colleagues are fully committed to the process, slippage can occur due to pressure of work or other 'just causes'.

Reporting Procedures: Reporting procedures are deliberately kept to a minimum. At the beginning of the academic year colleagues submit a brief report describing the focus of their review and the name of the reviewer. At the end of the academic session a summary report is be completed electronically by the reviewee providing a brief description of;

- the focus of the review
- the review process
- the main outcomes including any implications for module development and anything which may be usefully disseminated to colleagues at subject team, faculty or university level

Any staff development needs arising from the peer-supported review process are reported separately and discussed in confidence with the reviewee's line manager at appraisal.

Disseminating Outcomes: It is anticipated that the outcomes of some review processes will be of interest to other colleagues. Staff are therefore asked to indicate whether they feel it would be useful to disseminate particular outcomes and the potential audience with whom results might be shared. In this way it hoped that the maximum benefit will be derived from the process.

Staff Development: It is considered essential that peer-supported review and staff development processes dovetail effectively together. At present there is a commitment to ensure that staff development needs arising from the P-S-R of LTA are discussed at appraisal together with any other LTA-related developments needs.

Evaluation of P-S-R of LTA

At present there is a considerable amount of anecdotal evidence to suggest that the P-S-R of LTA is very much better than the peer observation process that it replaced but as yet the process has not been fully evaluated. P-S-R of LTA was developed in 2002/3 and piloted by four staff in that year. As a result of the very positive feedback received from all four staff, the process was rolled out the following year across the School of Leisure and Food Management. It was not possible to evaluate the new process in 2003/4 as the University was engaged in a major restructuring exercise through which ten Schools were to be replaced by four new faculties. However, sufficient of the new process had been disseminated internally to convince the University to commit to the establishment of P-S-R of LTA within the four new faculties.

The Next Stages of Development

The next stages of development are to be based on a collaborative FDTL5 project designed to capitalise on the encouraging outcomes of P-S-R of LTA. The project, which was began in January this year, is being developed by a consortium based at Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Gloucestershire. Initial stages of the project will:

- review staff perceptions of the previous peer observation systems
- establish P-S-R of LTA in all four faculties at Sheffield Hallam University and in the School of Sport and Leisure at the University of Gloucestershire.
- widely disseminate the results via dissemination partners at the Universities of Brighton, Northumbria, Oxford Brookes and Ulster.

Later stages of the project will seek to apply the principle of peer support to the staff development processes at participating institutions.

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The impact of academic development: questioning my evaluation practices

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Context

Over the past few years, I have struggled with questions related to the nature and the value of the academic development I do. In what follows, I describe my personal journey, specifically the questions I have been asking myself, the answers I have found so far … and the new questions I am now asking!

Like many other academic developers, I believe that ultimately enhancing student learning is the goal I am working towards. So, I have been intent on trying to design academic development activities that will have such an impact. And, I have struggled with how to judge the impact of my work beyond participant reaction - likely the most common measure used today (Gullatt and Weaver, 1997). In fact, my colleagues and I in the development unit at McGill spent over a year trying unsuccessfully to design a way to document impact beyond participant reaction.

A while ago, I was asked to contribute a chapter on the nature of staff workshops that have an impact on students (McAlpine, 2003). This request focused me on seeking an empirical basis for my design and evaluation decisions. Although workshops are only one aspect of academic development, attention on them seemed appropriate given that they are common, highly visible and their impact more frequently judged than most other activities (Weimer & Firing Lenze, 1994).

Examining studies of workshops that impacted on students

I searched the literature for studies of workshops which had tracked impact on students (in addition to impact on participants), and found ten publications representing seven initiatives between 1983 and 2002. Of these seven workshops, six reported changes in students as a result, though one only minimally.

I analyzed the workshop descriptions, and, in two cases, contacted the authors for more information. My intent was to derive a) empirically-based design characteristics that resulted in impact on students and b) measures for judging this impact. These are described in the two sections that follow.

Common design characteristics: In order to provide a basis for comparison between your own practices and those reported in the studies, you may find it interesting to think of a workshop you have designed in terms of the following characteristics:

- *Goal(s):*
- *Activities:*
- *Participation required or voluntary:*
- *Length:*
- *Stand alone or with follow-up*:

While the evidence is limited, the workshops that had an impact on students shared the following design characteristics:

- *Goals*: They addressed students and learning in direct explicit ways, e.g., integrating teaching of learning strategies into courses, developing skills related to giving effective student feedback.
- *Activities*: They actively involved participants in application - practice and feedback - in

relation to their own teaching context, e.g., analysis of classroom videotapes, designing a project for implementation.
- *Participation:* This was voluntary.
- *Length*: Interactions were at least 12 hours in length, e.g., 3 hours per day over 4 days.
- *Stand alone or with follow-up*: There was follow-up, often for as long as a semester to help with implementation.

If you are in similar circumstances to me, incorporating all of these characteristics can seem somewhat daunting. While I can have some direct influence over the design of *goals* and *activities*, the other characteristics may be difficult to incorporate into workshop designs due to: logistics, allocation of resources, institutional requirements making participation non-voluntary, not to mention staff availability for extended periods. For instance, the fact that in institutions such as mine workshops are often 2-3 hours long gives me pause: What can be achieved in that amount of time?

Still, the findings provide an empirical basis for a) making design decisions, and b) convincing others about the design decisions I want to make. For instance, if workshops need to be kept short, an argument could still be made for a financial investment to provide follow-up support.

Examining impact: The second analysis was the evaluation of impact on students. Since I had not been successful in doing this myself, I was interested in what others had done. I examined the focus of interest (e.g., student behaviour) as well as the measure(s) used (e.g., observation grid).

If you have ever tried (or imagined trying) to assess impact on students of a workshop, what was the:

- *focus of interest*
- *measure(s) used*

The studies examined one or more of the following using the measures described:

- In-class behaviour: pre and post workshop classroom observations or videotapes
- Course rankings (cumulative): post workshop student test scores, grades, pass rates, GPA, student ratings
- Theoretical learning constructs (e.g., perception of approach to learning): standardized protocols
- Products of learning: analysis of artefacts of student course work, such as quizzes and exams

All studies seriously addressed research design issues (e.g. pre and post measures), and incorporated some comparison with a control group. Thus, the analysis of the literature was reassuring; there was evidence that workshops can be powerful enough to impact on students.

However, the amount of work involved in carrying out these studies appeared staggering. One of the researchers confirmed this perception unsolicited by telling me that she would not do the study again because of the time required (Chalmers, 2002). Her experience paralleled ours in the development unit; we had abandoned our attempt to track impact on students because it would have been too costly of our resources. This realization led me to question my underlying assumptions about evaluating academic development activities.

Challenges and questions about tracking impact: my explorations

I asked myself: What if anything is the significance of the results in relation to the effort expended? Why do I do what I do? These questions made me realize I needed to go back and re-examine the pedagogical basis (the why) for how I documented impact. I believed that if I made explicit my espoused theories, I could see how they related to my practices. Interestingly, when I asked myself - What is my personal theory of learning? - I found it very easy to be explicit about the coherence between my espoused theories and actions in, for instance, aligning strategies to goals. However, I had

great difficulty linking my theory of learning to my practice of evaluation. In fact, I was hardly able to explain it at all, which was rather disturbing.

In examining the literature on learning theories, I found that I was not alone in this difficulty of linking learning and evaluation. For instance, in a basic text (Driscoll, 2000), I looked at theories that I believe represent my approach to learning: constructivism (e.g., learners as active seekers of meaning with ownership of learning) and situated cognition (e.g., learning as a socially negotiated joint enterprise). In neither case was there an explicit reference to evaluation. Rather disturbingly, while the literature acknowledges the value of the link between learning and evaluation, a central theory that addresses it in relation to instruction is lacking (Pellegrino, 2002).

So, I approached my question 'why I do what I do in relation to evaluation?' by a different route - by examining my practice. I asked myself: Who decides what evidence to collect? Who values and uses this evidence? I realized that I (alone or with my unit colleagues) usually decided, and that I and the unit were the ones who valued and used the evidence. I was struck by the fact that my evaluation practice and my espoused theory of learning were not in alignment – I valued fostering ownership of learning and negotiating different perspectives but was making all the evaluation decisions independently of the workshop participants. (Interestingly, I realized that I intentionally used peer and self evaluation as a strategy within most workshops, while failing to do so as regards impact afterwards!)

Further, I realized that I had allowed the perceptions of others about my academic developer role to negatively influence my integrity as an educator. I had let the institutional assumption that I have responsibility to provide certain kinds of evidence for administrative purposes interfere with my own

beliefs, yet in Canada there is still considerable flexibility about what those measures are. More importantly and rather disconcertingly, I realized that I hadn't actively questioned the staff assumption that I was the 'teacher' and would decide as the teacher often does about how to judge impact.

I asked myself - Why are my practices with staff modelling and reinforcing a dependency on 'the instructor' - the teacher being the one who decides what and how to evaluate - rather than fostering my espoused values? Again, I was reassured by the literature that this difficulty - a lack of alignment between theory and practice in evaluation - is recognized as a challenge. Shepard (2001) says the ideal is rarely matched in practice, and that changing evaluation practices is the most difficult educational reform. What I found particularly striking in my reading was the notion of consequential validity. Shepard and others such as Boud (1995) remind us that in thinking about our practices we need to attend to the long-term consequences of our decisions and actions; we need to ask ourselves - what are the broader effects of a given evaluation activity beyond those which are immediately evident, particularly those which we may not be personally privy to?

Developing new practices

So, the challenge I have been giving myself more recently is to be intentional in jointly examining with workshop participants the possibilities for evaluation afterwards. Previously, I had asked participants to respond on a feedback form to the question 'what are you going to do (differently) as a result of this workshop?' I collected this information and later used it myself to assess the worth of the activity. Now, however, during the workshop I use variants of the following questions, either informally, one-on-one, or more formally. In the latter case, answers are discussed in pairs or small groups before a plenary, and I provide a

sheet for individuals to record (and keep) their ideas.
- What, if anything, do you foresee doing (differently) as a result of the workshop?
- What difference will it make to student learning?
- How will you know?

Participants often define very specific concerns that only they can be cognizant of. For instance, one (Smith, 2002) decided that as a result of his re-design of a statistics module, the issue of most concern to him was examining the extent to which student conceptual learning of a particular concept was improved (rather than computational ability). Further, he decided to document student self-perception of understanding.

Healey (2005) has commented that the strategy I have been recently exploring (exemplified in what Smith (2002) did) is similar to that described in Pace & Mittendorf, 2004) where the focus is more specific: bottlenecks to learning, difficulties that students experience in understanding concepts in specific courses. In teasing out the nature of these bottlenecks, the key question staff explore is "What do the students have to do to show that they have overcome this bottleneck?' Their answers often lead to changes in ways of teaching (e.g., the nature of assignments), as well as interest in evaluating the impact of these changes.

The principle underlying my and Pace & Mittendorf's (2002) questions is that staff are the most knowledgeable about the students, the learning tasks and the subject matter in a specific course and thus better placed than us to define what to examine, change and evaluate. Our role is to provide a scaffold or structure in which to jointly explore the aspects of learning most meaningful to evaluate in their contexts.

As a result of this change in practice, I have become more sensitive to consequential validity. By jointly exploring how to examine impact, I have learned to be more attentive to

the particular disciplinary and institutional contexts in which staff and their students are situated. For instance, the time commitment in teaching a biology class of 700 students has a profound influence on what aspect of student learning an instructor may wish to change and document – even whether s/he wishes to take this on. I have also learned to broaden my notion of what is valuable to evaluate. Recently, a colleague told me what he would most value as a sign of impact would be active support by key players in the unit. This resonates with Rust's (1998) report about individuals interviewed several months after a workshop named as evidence of change that the ideas they had implemented were being copied by others.

Why do I do what I do?

So, I now am exploring new questions:
- To what extent do I intentionally seek to understand others' criteria for success?
- What indicators do they recognize and value as representing evidence of impact?
- Do I value and honour these equally with my own?
- How can I support their efforts?

As answers slowly emerge and new questions arise, I remind myself that it is the questions rather than the answers are the more powerful in my learning.

"Every question possesses a power that does not lie in the answer …"
Elie Wiesel

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Effective interventions to support practitioners' adoption of e-learning

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Introduction

In issue 5.4 of *Educational Developments*, Martin Oliver asked the question 'What can we do to help academics start using e-learning?' (Oliver, 2005) He summarised the work of the practitioner study which was funded by the JISC with the aim of informing the design of a series of practitioner focussed resources. The focus on practitioners is important and Becta's review of information and learning technology (ILT) in further education reminds us that "a key element in achieving this integration of ILT into teaching and learning is a well trained body of staff." (Becta, 2003a, p.5).

As the starting point of the practitioners' study, I undertook an initial review of previous staff development resources and initiatives which had been designed to promote the use of e-learning through their work with practitioners (Sharpe, 2004a). What follows here is a summary of this review focussing on the question: *What can we do through our staff development interventions to support practitioners in the adoption of e-learning?*

To attempt to provide some direction to this question, the review drew on and combined two existing bodies of knowledge. Firstly, the literature of how professionals learn and develop and the implications for educational development (Sharpe, 2004b). Secondly, feedback from previous staff development initiatives designed to promote the use of e-learning from further and higher education. These included Becta's review of information and learning technology (Becta, 2003a), the Evaluation of the Ferl Practitioners' Programme (Becta, 2003b), consultation with the JISC e-learning and pedagogy programme's expert group and the review of the Embedding Learning Technologies programmes resulting from the EFFECTS project (Beetham, 2003) and its subsequent SEDA-PDF award.

A number of factors could be identified as having influenced the effectiveness of such staff development interventions and these were organised around three interrelated emerging themes: supporting professional learning, resource creation and use and working within existing communities

Supporting practitioners to change their conceptions of teaching and learning

A focus on *effective* adoption is important; indeed the aims of the JISC's e-learning and pedagogy programme are explicit about expecting effective adoption and go on to define this as 'pedagogically sound, learner-focused and accessible' (JISC, 2004). Our interest is not in

promoting the use of e-learning for its own sake but improving the student experience by supporting practitioners to incorporate e-learning effectively into their teaching. As in educational development as a whole, the learning technology field has shifted from being primarily focussed on 'how to' use a piece of software or hardware, to supporting e-learning experts to take on new roles where they need a range of non-technical skills including curriculum development, evaluation and resource planning (Dempster & Deepwell, 2003) and programmes for their developments attempt to meet these needs. This can be seen in focus of the Embedding Learning Technologies (ELT) programmes on knowledge, values and choices in educational design, and in the Ferl Practitioners Programme (FPP) which explicitly aimed to move away from providing only ICT skills.

So, we have moved to a situation where we are hoping to develop practitioner skills and knowledge in the good pedagogical use of technologies and effective learning design. This is likely to involve as a first step, supporting practitioners towards changing their conceptions of teaching and learning. As such, we should not be surprised that the elements of constructivism, action learning and peer supported learning were positively evaluated in the review of programmes of development.

Real life experiences are consistently rated positively by practitioners as forums where they can engage with peers, challenge each other and construct their own meanings. The FPP for example was designed to be integrated into existing staff development programmes and the evaluation of the pilots found that often the core modules were supported by face to face sessions before individuals moved to work on the strands by self-study. Those participants who worked through the materials in this way rated the group sessions and peer interaction highly. Similar findings were reported by the evaluation of the ELT courses. Here programme leaders confirmed that their ELT participants gained from the more intensive periods of development and learning facilitated by being part of a cohort.

Cycles of learning are most clearly seen in the SEDA ELT learning outcomes which encourage practitioners to approach their embedding of learning technology in a systematic fashion. The review of these programmes concluded that whilst a full staff development programme wasn't necessary for every participant, they did gain from the structure provided by the outcomes. For novice practitioners this will often mean structured time, perhaps in staff development sessions, workshops and appraisals. However, even highly motivated and expert practitioners need time to engage, prompts to review and reflect on their own practice, and help in translating between the theoretical and practical aspects of the situation.

Two potential challenges were identified in this section. First, despite our best attempts to promote topics for development with a pedagogical focus, we may have to find a balance between the knowledge and skills we wish to promote and those practitioners will actually sign up for. For practitioners working in e-learning, it still seems to be the new technologies, or innovative uses of existing ones, which have consistent appeal. Second, for those practitioners who are *learning*, it's unlikely that even a very rich resource or tool is going to be as effective as an intervention. This led us to consider the processes of resource creation and use as the basis of a peer learning experience in the following two sections.

Resource creation and use

The reviews of previous interventions confirm practitioners' desire for highly contextualised representations and a lack of patience with resources which aren't targeted directly at them. It was recognised that case studies have a wide appeal and are particularly good for providing the highly contextualised real life stories that practitioners prefer. Contextualisation might also come from the institution and the review of ELT programmes notes a positive link to local and institutional priorities as being particularly attractive to participants. Here it was noted that participants favoured 'just-in-time' development where the context might be set by a specific learning and teaching problem or new agenda.

However, as Martin Oliver said (Oliver,2005), there was an early move in this project from focussing only on resources such as case studies to seeing these as part of staff development interventions. It did become clear quite quickly, and we have argued elsewhere, that in order for resources to have an impact on practice, they need to be become 'living' artefacts, enhanced by their role in collaborative activities. The notion of active artefacts allows for the possibility of collaborative creation and use, offering facilities for commentary and feedback, peer review and refinement in the light of experience. Such active artefacts support processes of peer learning whereby representations are constantly created, shared and tested (Sharpe, Beetham & Ravenscroft, 2004).

There are practical problems around the rewards in the creation and use of resources. We might want to suggest that practitioners engage in the creation and use of the types of resources familiar to staff developers such as guidelines, prompts for reflection or toolkits. Actually these types of resources aren't valued within the academic community to the same degree as peer reviewed academic publications. It is difficult to identify the pay-off for individuals who undertake the work of annotating, collating, synthesising, commenting, evaluating, re-contextualising, and re-developing. The review of the ELT schemes, although not promoting accreditation for all, did discuss the kinds of rewards perceived as worth by different participants e.g. experienced academics might not want credit but might want a way to publish a paper.

Another potential problem which seems to be a common experience from previous projects is the difficulty of getting practitioners to produce cases studies in a common format or without payment or help with writing

them. This may in part be due to the lack of academic value of this work and in part because while practitioners are happy enough to tell their stories of successes, we are all less comfortable putting our name to the failures. Finally, practitioners may be protective about sharing their own content or learning designs, or indeed not willing to use those produced by others.

Working within existing communities

Communities of practice were suggested to have powerful influences on the appropriate location of development activities throughout the review and there may be real advantages to working within the existing communities in which practitioners are already based to make e-learning part of their practice. It was suggested that rather than offering practitioners yet more resources to use, we could offer the chance to create resources and link this to the powerful influences of collaborative resource creation as a tool for community building. Working within and for communities could also allow us to deal with the affective aspects of conceptual change as well as the purely cognitive.

Community building may best be facilitated by local developers who frequently mediate between practitioners and resources. Beetham (2002) found that most academic staff interviewed had become proficient in the use of learning technologies with the support of specialist staff from a learning technologies or educational development unit. In a case study of the support offered at a single institution, Oliver (2004) reported that learning technology staff were able to establish common ground between developers and practitioners (such as through a common discipline), establish and maintain an ongoing dialogue with staff to identify what they perceive their needs to be and develop a good understanding of the realities of practitioner's work e.g. actual course design processes at work, the inequalities of the workplace or the changes in working practice. So perhaps we should think about the training of more staff developers as e-learning specialists to encourage dialogue within the context and of their own communities.

In terms of potential problems, it is worth noting that there are some examples of what we might consider well designed resources and interventions not being well used. Both FPP and SEDA ELT are clear that they have moved the learning technology agenda forward, but actually the take up is not as high or of the type they would like. The FPP materials were deliberately designed in a series of small chunks so that they could be taken in any order and could be adapted to local organisational circumstances. However, the evaluation of pilots showed that only 22% of colleges had made any adaptations to the materials to suit their local circumstances. Supporting practitioners to adopt e-learning might first involve supporting institutions to adapt existing materials to suit their needs.

Conclusions and recommendations

The practitioners' study started by asking what staff development resources and interventions can do to support practitioners to adopt e-learning. In particular, the project brief was to inform the design of a series of practitioner-focussed resources for the JISC. The review summarised here attempted to combine the professional learning literature with real life experience of staff development e-learning initiatives to highlight where there was synergy and/or tensions between the two. This led to a number of specific recommendations applicable to e-learning development programmes which I hope have been usefully summarised here. More broadly, and for the purposes of the project, we were able quickly to conclude that resources on their own are unlikely to able to support practitioners in adopting new approaches. The renewed focus on professional learning shifted our focus away from attempts to define which *types* of resources might be effective, towards the impact that creating, adapting and contextualising resources have on practitioner's learning and development.

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Discipline-specific Professional Development: just branding?

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Introduction

Having always found educational theory and research to be relevant to my own learning and teaching (English literature and sociolinguistics in higher education), I have difficulty in understanding other people's reservations about materials and idea developed outside their discipline. As September 2004 came round, and I entered again into the same discussions as the previous year with the staff on our new lecturers' course about whether the theories and research of educational development were relevant for their discipline, I thought it was time I took a less irritable and more scholarly approach. I set out to find out more about perceptions in this area, (a) for my own satisfaction, (b) to introduce some variety in the repetitive conversations I have with colleagues on the subject, and (c) to improve the new lecturers' programme.

This paper was presented as a workshop at the November 2004 SEDA conference in Birmingham, where I received some enormously helpful insights and suggestions from generous and thoughtful colleagues, and particularly Dr Pat Young. I have also benefited from conversations with Professor Ben Knights, Director of the English Subject Centre. Neither of these kind people is in any way to blame for the views expressed here.

As I've said, my views of the cross-disciplinary relevance of principles and theories of educational development are at odds with the majority of participants at the start of our new lecturers' programme (although the attitudes expressed change during the year). Talking to academic staff across the College, there is clearly far more support for the Subject Centres than the Higher Education Academy, and this is always couched in terms of relevance to the discipline. As I began to read on the subject, I realised that not only did I not see eye to eye with my academic colleagues but that I was at odds with most of the literature as well. By now I was beginning to feel intellectually exposed as the cold winds of scholarly disapproval skittered over my skin. For example, Healey (2000:169) argues that 'the scholarship of teaching needs to be developed within the context of the culture of the disciplines in which it is applied' . Gilchrist and Clark similarly state:

''There is little doubt that different subjects do raise quite distinct teaching issues… It is further evident that CPD in educational issues, as distinct to subject development, would become more attractive to experienced staff if it could be directly related to their teaching problems in their own subject''.

Gilchrist 2004:26

''The development of teaching and learning in higher education, then, is best not seen as a generic and practical activity which does not involve disciplinary thinking. If it does, it will inevitably be sucked into the reductive discourse of the culture of compliance''.

Clark 2000:62

These quotations indicate that some scholars feel very strongly that educational development should take a disciplinary perspective rather than a generic one; what I have not found clear on the basis of these publications is why.

Defining Disciplines

There are several taxonomies in circulation for grouping and distinguishing between disciplines. According to the taxonomy used by Kolb (1981), and adapted by Becher and Trowler (2001), the discipline of pedagogy (or andragogy if you prefer) is *soft* and *applied*, being a functional subject with relatively low paradigm consensus (i.e. there is usually more than one acceptable approach to tackling a given research question). It therefore is a very different discipline from those practised in research and teaching by many participants on the new lecturers' programme.

''In high paradigm consensus or 'hard' disciplines, knowledge is perceived as cumulative and concerned with universals, quantification, and discovery (Becher 1989, Biglan 1973). Hard disciplines are characterised by wide spread agreement about curriculum content, research collaboration, competition for recognition and funding, clearly defined intellectual boundaries, and gatekeeping of those boundaries by a powerful elite (Becher 1989; Lodahl & Gordon 1972). In contrast, low paradigm consensus or 'soft' disciplines consider knowledge as recursive; scholars use new lenses to explore intellectual territory already mapped out by others. Knowledge is also concerned with particulars, qualities and understanding (Becher 1989, Biglan 1973). Soft disciplines are characterised by idiosyncratic curricula, weak boundaries, independent research efforts and tolerance for unusual ideas or methods (Becher, 1989; Biglan 1973)…. The knowledge and social structures of hard disciplines appear to define faculty work behaviour more rigorously than the knowledge and social structures of soft disciplines. Faculty in hard disciplines, therefore, may have fewer opportunities to integrate teaching and research than faculty in soft disciplines''.

Colbeck 1998:651

From these definitions, it can be concluded that disciplinary differences affect:

- Concepts of evidence, argument and appropriate presentation, including writing style, relating to location of the discipline on pure/applied and hard/soft axis;
- Community practices (e.g. rules of interaction; status; concepts of apprenticeship);
- How information is structured for learners, in terms of at what stage and how complexity is communicated;
- Habitual learning and teaching methods (e.g. whether the class and the lecturer expect chalk and talk, fieldwork trips or small group work);
- How reusable a reusable learning object is (e.g. how excited you would be to find a well-written online exercise in, say, simple statistics);

This analysis is supported by the content of Subject Centre web sites, which on the basis of review provide the following discipline-specific services:
- subject based **communities:** shared discourse, shared values, common networks
- **events** run by discipline specialists
- **resources** / "reusable learning objects" / case studies
- debates on curriculum **content.**

In a review of a range of Subject Centre websites and publications, there is no evidence of disciplinary differences in:
- principles of how students learn; models such as Bloom's taxonomy of learning appear frequently (although scholars in the English Subject Centre and at Keele are using methods from literary studies to develop models of student learning);
- principles of curriculum design (though discipline obviously affects the specifics);
- the most widely used learning and teaching methods: lectures, seminars, tutorials, problem classes e.g. the History Subject Centre uses the advice in the *Teaching More Students* series for running seminars. Where activities are distinctive, such as laboratory work, fieldtrips or practicals (and the latter two occur in arts as well as sciences), they are often build on the same presumptions as the other activities (again, supported by subject centre web sites);
- principles of assessment.

It is unclear whether the cross-discipline materials on subject centre web sites are selected because there is little pedagogic research available that is genuinely discipline specific (a situation which might change with growing interest and investment) or whether existing research really has cross-discipline applicability but needs to be branded as discipline-specific in order to be used. Topics discussed with new lecturers on our accredited programme include the list below; can we imagine discipline–specific versions of the following elements, and if they existed, what would they look like? (a question debated in several subject centres, including English).

Models of student learning
Psychological/cognitive models (including specific learning difficulties; learning styles, Bloom's learning taxonomy; Perry's model of learning as progressive stages); psychological-biological models of stress; motivation and fear; sociological models: social constructivism, the learning cycle; gendered models;

Curriculum design theory:
Including constructivism; the aligned curriculum; curriculum design to promote deep approaches to learning; transferable skills and employability as core concepts in curriculum development; research/teaching links;

Teaching methods:
Session planning; limitations of conventional lectures and how to make lectures as effective as possible; presentation skills; setting group work tasks and facilitating group work; promoting active learning and independent learning; problem based learning; skills for running tutorials;

Assessment:
Assessment methods; marking criteria; providing feedback to students; marking, moderation and examination boards;

Student diversity & support:
Working with other university services; legislation and university policies; considerations for teaching students from different class backgrounds, ethnicities and religions; with special needs; implications of gender and sexual orientation legislation.

It seems to me that these topics need to be significant components of a professional development programme for teaching in higher education that meets threshold standards, and are largely discipline-independent. Indeed, many reflect the accreditation requirements for the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, now the Higher Education Academy. Interestingly, these requirements include: 'knowledge of… models of how students learn, both generically and in their subject', although there seems to be, as mentioned above, relatively little literature available on the second element.

Of course, to take account of the specific circumstances in which participants teach, generic programmes can, should and often do deliver the following:

- early acknowledgement of disciplinary differences (which will also produce evidence of disciplinary similarities);
- participants encouraged to apply all theories in their own contexts;
- assessment tasks rooted in disciplines and personal practice;
- action research;
- information about discipline-based pedagogic scholarship (where it exists);
- case studies;
- choices or strands in programme which include discipline specific activity;

- awareness that staff from some disciplines may dominate class discussion and small group work;
- subject centre activities counted in lieu of attendance on the accredited programme if learning outcomes match up.

But what if, despite all these elements, participants still respond with 'that's not relevant to my discipline?' A selection of the tried and tested solutions suggested by the SEDA workshop audience were:

- Match the discipline of the presenter to the discipline of the audience;
- Match the 'branding' of visuals to the departments' web site (borrow logos and images);
- Identify who in the line of management is counter-briefing, and work on gaining their support;
- Make action research an earlier and more significant component of the programme;
- Re-examine the approach taken to take greater account of participants' reactions.

One further suggestion is to run programmes (partially or entirely) which are discipline specific, either institutionally if the cohort size and resources permit, or nationally through the subject centres. Tables 1 and 2 outline what I see as some of the benefits and disadvantages of cross-department institutional programmes of professional development compared with department-based or discipline-based professional development activities.

At Royal Holloway we are planning to work with smaller groups of new lecturers in September 2005, subdividing the expected cohort of 25 into groups of about five (but not by discipline) to test whether group size was contributing to the problem, by limiting questions, discussion and use of specific examples.

Other angles

But is this really a question of discipline? There are a number of arguments which suggests that the perception of disciplinary differences in learning and teaching is social not epistemological in origin, and a convincing argument in my view is based on the untidiness of discipline groupings. It is not uncommon to have staff within a department (Geography is a good example) undertaking research located on both sides of the pure/applied and the soft/pure divides. There will certainly be staff in Geography whose teaching and research has more in common in method and content with colleagues working in politics, sociology, drama or literature studies departments than with the person in the next office who works on fossils. The sense staff have of a discipline community is based on (I suggest rather arbitrary) social configurations rather than epistemological common ground. Stephen Rowland points to the fragmentation of disciplines into specialist sub-disciplines in order to problematise the concept of disciplines:

''During the 1990s, the literature in the field of chemistry grew by more than half a million articles per year (Clark

2000). In the same study, 8,500 different specialities in the sciences were identified. In this situation, it is hardly surprising that academics often feel themselves to share little, in the way of intellectual interest, even with others in their own department, let alone those in other discipline areas. Moreover, as disciplines become increasingly broken down into more highly specialised sub-disciplines, so the very idea of the discipline itself becomes redundant. Indeed, there are those who argue that the very concept of the discipline is no longer meaningful''.

Rowland 2002:61

A further suggestion of the social component of disciplinary difference emerged at the November SEDA conference workshop, where we had a non-scientific show of hands from the 28 participants indicating a substantial difference in the perceived reactions to generic programmes in predominantly research-led institutions compared to those with lower research income, where complaints of irrelevance were less common. There are many possible interpretations of this indicative finding; two seem most likely to me: either (1) in pre-1992 universities, individuals' expectations of the benefits conferred by completing the programme are lower, which negatively affects their motivation and perception of relevance; (2) that disciplines are a stronger element of identity in research-intensive universities. In either case, it would seem that social factors rather than essential disciplinary differences are highly significant in understanding the dynamics of the situation. In fact my SEDA audience largely assumed the key issues to be social rather than epistemological, and none the less influential for that.

Conclusions

It is my contention that disciplinary differences in pedagogy are frequently overstated in two main ways: (1) there are many aspects of pedagogy which apply across all disciplines; (2) discipline boundaries are in many cases social and arbitrary rather than epistemological and essential. It is nevertheless the case that perception of disciplinary difference is a real and highly influential phenomenon which educational development needs to take into account. This paper has suggested some methods by which cross-department institutional programmes already address subject differences and discipline allegiances.

In the coming year, I will be investigating discipline-specific concepts of student learning in more depth, supported by SEDA small grant.

The Educational Development Centre at Royal Holloway is collaborating with the English Subject Centre to host an event on Pedagogic Research in English, scheduled for Friday May 13th 2005 at Royal Holloway. Details are available from the web site at: http://www.english.heacademy.ac.uk/

Generic or discipline-specific? Developing Effective Professional Development Programmes for Academic Staff

Generic models of educational development	
Scholarly benefits	• relatively well-developed literature relating to learning, curriculum development; spans psychology; sociology; politics, gender studies and more
Logistic benefits	• can be led by a minimum of one educational developer (without needing one for each school or department); by having a education focus rather than a discipline focus, this person may be a more experienced facilitator, more familiar with learning & teaching advancements, and more aware of institutional change issues; • can attract sufficient numbers to be run within an HEI; therefore local and easily timetabled; linked to other aspects of HEI policy
Pedagogic benefits	• addresses principles and theories underlying learning and teaching, and concerns such as SENDA, widening participation, PDP, etc. arguably common to all students and disciplines, • Our experience has been that the feedback on sessions run by educational developers is better than the sessions run by subject experts (including perceived relevance), despite complaints about not being subject specific • can provoke reviews of 'taken-for-granteds' and challenge disciplinary practices, in teaching and assessment methods, existing range of methods used in disciplines, attitudes towards required skills and attitudes towards recruitment
Institutional management benefits	• can create institutional culture/ community of teachers, and foster institutional mission
Sector benefits	• can foster development of interdisciplinary communities with shared pedagogic values • reduces sense of isolation for new staff at odds with aspects of departmental culture.

Subject Specific models of educational development	
Can be led by staff from that disciplinary background	• status in the eyes of participants associated with a successful career in that disciplinary area • language, metaphors and epistemological assumptions are familiar to participants • shared background knowledge of people and events; fosters and works with a sense of community
Can address particular forms and styles of teaching specific to the discipline	• e.g. fieldtrips; practical sessions; lab sessions;
Can address particular skills requirements which affect student progression and achievement	• e.g. maths, statistics, technical skills, well-developed reading and writing skills
Can address issues relating to recruitment profile	• e.g. when subjects tend to have recruitment patterns which are gendered; recruit well or poorly from certain ethnic groups or class backgrounds; recruit students with particular disabilities (e.g. specific learning difficulties)
Can acknowledge existing habits of teaching and assessment	• e.g. practicals, chalk & board work, student-led seminars; transmission focussed non-interactive lectures;

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University life down under

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The Australian context

Australia might be on the other side of the world from the UK but the challenges facing staff and universities in both countries are remarkably similar. Nevertheless, there are some interesting features of higher education in Australia that need to be appreciated in order to understand some of the issues of concern here.

Australia has a total of 41 universities, 37 of which are public. They vary in size with about equal numbers under 10,000 students, between 10,000 and 20,000 students, and over 20,000 students. The current suite of universities emerged following the redesignation of what were called colleges of advanced education and institutes of technology as universities in 1990. Some 15 years later universities are beginning to form alliances based on perceived similarities in roles and histories. For example, eight research intensive and largely older universities formed, somewhat unimaginatively, the Group of Eight, and have been joined by the Australian Technology Network group, the Innovative Research Universities group and most recently the New Generation Universities group.

While the basic nature of Australian universities will be familiar to those in the UK, there are some interesting differences. First, Australia, like the USA, is a federation of states and territories and has separate state and territory governments as well as the Commonwealth Government. The significance of this is that universities, unlike (say) schools or hospitals, are funded directly by the Commonwealth Government. However, universities themselves are constituted through their respective state or territory governments, each with their own legislative acts and requirements. The Commonwealth Government has recently signaled its intention to bring all universities under its control, something that no doubt will be resisted by some of the states and territories who see universities as integral to their economies.

A second issue to note arises from that iconic feature of Australia - its size. This imposes a number of constraints on higher education, notably the lack of movement of Australian school leavers between the major city centres which are largely situated on the coastal fringe of the country. While we might talk of a single unified system of 37 public universities, in reality the

universities in each of the states and territories remain relatively independent with respect to student participation. "Going to university" may mean something a little different in Australia where most students attend a local institution and many school leavers start university living at home.

Current issues facing higher education in Australia

Like higher education institutions across the world, universities in Australia are attempting to come to terms with balancing costs, quality and equity in an environment of decreasing government support, increasing demands, changing expectations and rapidly diversifying student population. A feature of the Australian context has been the provision of higher education to overseas students, predominantly from the Asian region, who now make up some 16% of university students in Australia. The growth in overseas students has been driven in part by the need for universities to generate additional income. However, addressing issues such as admission requirements and assessment standards has presented most universities with some serious challenges.

Quality assurance, in particular, has been a major issue, due largely to the fact that Australian universities are self-accrediting institutions and until recently, unlike the situation in many other countries, lacked a systematic national external quality assurance system. The quality of Australian higher education itself has not been in doubt. However, in an era of public accountability, mere assertions of quality can no longer be considered sufficient.

In 2000, in response to the clear need for an enhanced quality assurance system , the state, territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education agreed to the establishment of the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA).

AUQA
AUQA began operating in 2001 and is conducting audits of all universities on a five yearly cycle. The process being used requires universities to conduct a self-review and summarise the results in a portfolio. This portfolio is examined by a panel of auditors who then conduct a detailed site visit that involves interviewing staff from all levels and areas of the institution. Their report, which is made available as a public document, includes a set of commendations as well as a set of recommendations with respect to which to which the institution prepares a response and an implementation plan.

The AUQA approach is based primarily on institutions being judged against their own mission and objectives, something seen by some as a weakness. However, AUQA expects institutions to have established and to be able to justify their own standards and benchmarks as they see appropriate. Another concern is the very large amount of time and resources being allocated by universities to their self-review and portfolio preparation, though perhaps this initial cycle will prove to be atypical. It is not unusual for institutions to say that the AUQA review was the incentive for doing a lot of things they had been intending to do for some time. Moreover,

handled strategically within institutions, the self-review process can be a powerful staff development exercise.

Overall, the AUQA approach is encouraging an evidence-based approach to quality assurance and quality improvement based on requiring universities to state what are attempting to do and why, how they are attempting to achieve these objectives, what results they have achieved and what actions they have taken on the basis of these outcomes. This is an approach that those who work in staff development feel comfortable with and for this reason academic development units in many universities have played a major role in preparing their institutions for AUQA audits.

The role of the Commonwealth Government
The work of AUQA is complemented by the work of the Commonwealth Government through its funding mechanisms and its monitoring of performance data. One form this takes is what is called the Institution Assessment Framework Bilateral Discussions, a new accountability mechanism introduced in 2004. This involves the Commonwealth Government department (DEST) first preparing a detailed report on each institution containing a wide range of data covering finances, students, staff, learning and teaching, and research. These data are presented for a number of years for both the institution itself, the national average and the average of the group of universities the institution happens to be in e.g. the New Generation Universities. The institutional report is then used as the basis for a detailed strategic bilateral discussion held over a day between representatives of the Commonwealth Government and senior staff of the university.

The Australian Higher Education Review
A major national review of higher education in Australia was

conducted in 1998, a year after the UK Dearing review. However, this review and its subsequent recommendations did not engage effectively with the political process and failed to produce any significant outcomes. In March 2002 another review was launched, this time driven enthusiastically by the Commonwealth Minister for Education, and has resulted in the implementation of a large number of reforms which have the potential to significantly change the nature of higher education in Australia. The review, named *Higher Education at the Crossroads*, began with the release of seven scholarly papers (well worth reading) which provided the basis for an extensive public consultation process. The resultant reforms, named *Our Universities, Backing Australia's Future*, passed through the Commonwealth Parliament at the end of 2003. It is a complex package and only some of its elements can be outlined here.

The funding model
Perhaps the most significant aspect of the reform package is that funding for teaching and research has been explicitly separated. Actually, the split is between research on the one hand, through national competitive grants, and funding based on student numbers which is for teaching and scholarship. We are yet to have a serious discussion about what scholarship might mean in this context and specifically how it can be assessed. The significance of this initiative is that it neutralizes any argument about designating teaching-only universities since universities will be research orientated to the extent that their staff are successful at obtaining research grants. It leaves open, however, how universities themselves might translate this policy direction into their workload and promotion policies.

The funding model for teaching is, however, very complex and is on the basis of the number of students undertaking units of study (subjects or modules) in particular discipline clusters. The Commonwealth has designated twelve discipline clusters

(e.g. law, humanities, engineering) and provides funding to universities on the basis of the number of students taking units in these areas. For example, a university now receives $1,509 per annum for each equivalent full time student in law units but $16,394 for each equivalent full time student in agriculture units. The problem is that many courses require students to take units across a range of discipline clusters. Thus the income that universities get from the Commonwealth Government depends on both the curriculum structure of the courses and the elective units that students decide to take. If this sounds complex, it is, and universities are currently attempting to develop new systems to manage their finances. Furthermore, universities are given specific targets numbers for students in each of the disciplines clusters by the Commonwealth Government, with significant penalties imposed on universities that fail to achieve or exceed these targets.

At the same time, the amount of money that students contribute towards their undergraduate degree also depends on the discipline, except that there are three discipline clusters with respect to student contribution levels. For example, students studying law units will pay about $6,427 per year but those studying arts and humanities units will pay only about $3,854. In an extra twist, universities from 2005 can charge up to 25% extra student contribution - a gesture towards developing more of a market economy for higher education. Interestingly, preliminary results show little evidence that demand for particular institutions is affected by whether they have raised their student contribution above the base level.

Full-fee paying places
One of the most contentious aspects of the new higher education reform package is the expansion of full-fee paying places for Australian undergraduate students and the introduction of an income contingent loan scheme similar to that available for Commonwealth supported students. This will clearly represent some interesting issues for universities in terms of their admissions policies with respect to equity.

Learning entitlement
In a new initiative as part of the reform package, from 2005 students will be entitled to seven years of full time study as a Commonwealth supported student. In order to implement this scheme, and to track students' study across different universities, all students will be issued with a unique national identifying number with the rather ugly acronym of a CHESSN (Commonwealth Higher Education Student Support Number) which will be administered by a new national Web-based Higher Education Management System (HEIMS) being implemented in each university.

National Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education
One of the most significant aspects of the reform package is the establishment of a National Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education - clearly paralleling the creation of the Academy in the UK - with a mission of promoting and advancing learning and teaching in Australian higher education. The new Institute will be established in Melbourne with a budget of $22 million a year and a Planning Director has already been appointed. Just prior to its launch in August 2004 it was renamed the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in honour of a previous Commonwealth Minister of Higher Education. Amongst its many roles, the Institute will administer a greatly enhanced national teaching award scheme.

Learning and Teaching Performance Fund
A final feature of the new reform package worth noting is the creation of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund. The purpose of the fund will be to explicitly reward excellence, not facilitate quality improvement, and will allocate over $80 million each year to those few universities that best demonstrate excellence in learning and teaching. Implementation of the new scheme has been delayed while negotiations continue over how excellence is to be measured – clearly a problem given that the scheme is intended to be equitable across all institutions.

Institutional eligibility to apply for the funding from the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund will depend on satisfying a number of criteria. These include providing evidence for the systematic support for the professional development in learning and teaching for sessional and full-time academic staff, evidence of probation practices and policies which include effectiveness as a teacher, evidence of systematic students evaluation of teaching that inform probation and promotion decisions for academic positions and evidence that the student evaluation results are publicly available on the university's Web site. However, this preliminary assessment carries no funding, yet ironically may have the greatest impact on improving learning and teaching.

Looking forward
The initiatives described above, which represent just some of the changes occurring in higher education in Australia, are not dissimilar to what is happening in many countries. While most academic staff may not be directly involved with responding to and implementing the new policies, they are certainly aware of the accompanying change and uncertainty – many hoping it will all go away and that life can return to normal!

Such a view, while understandable, especially from those staff who simply want to get on with their teaching and research, it is not supported by the available evidence and indeed the future for higher education looks destined to be characterised by further and even more profound change.

In the face of this change and uncertainty it would seem that one approach for academic staff is to

work towards developing a greater professionalisation of academic work. However, an investigation conducted in Australia in 2003 revealed little interest among many academic staff in obtaining formal qualifications in higher education teaching, despite the fact that this activity was the predominant form of work for many. Unless there is a greater attempt to better clarify the nature of academic work and the relationship between teaching, scholarship and research, accompanied by the establishment of appropriate professional standards and agreed acceptable preparation for professional practice, academic staff are going to be vulnerable to the major changes sweeping higher education.

For those involved in staff development the implications are significant. Academic staff development units (ADUs) are by their very nature at the centre of change in universities. Increasingly there are pressures for ADUs to align themselves more strongly with university management and greater expectations on them to deliver strategic outcomes at a systemic level. To successfully negotiate this uncertain terrain will require renewed professionalism among academic developers on both sides of the globe.

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Managing Programmes of Small-Scale Research & Development Funding: Lessons from HEIs and Subject Centres

Dr Helen King FSEDA and **Laura Mattin,** The Higher Education Academy Subject Centres

Introduction

Since 1999, when the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF) was launched, a large number of small-scale projects have been undertaken in the higher education sector. This article aims to review the operation of these various small-scale funding programmes, in order to inform future schemes and practice.

To date, the primary funders of these small-scale projects have been:

- higher education institutions, many of which have directly supported learning and teaching research and development through the provision of project funding, thereby linking into the TQEF strategic priorities of 'research and innovation', 'building capacity for change' and 'disseminating and embedding good practice' (Gibbs et al, 2002);
- and Learning and Teaching Support Network subject centres (now part of the Higher Education Academy), many of which operate some form of grant scheme for discipline-based learning and teaching research or development projects.

Although relatively small individually (usually up to £5,000 per project), when considered as a whole these projects represent a considerable amount of resource both directly, through the project funding itself, and indirectly through the staff time required to manage the schemes. After four years of the TQEF and with the advent of the new Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) which will no doubt bring more such funding schemes into the arena, it is timely to look back and reflect on the processes of running programmes of small-scale project funding, to learn the lessons and to consider recommendations for future activity.

Here, we draw on four main sources of evidence that each constitute a different view of the process: Gibbs et al (2002) provides an overview of HEI-funded projects; Knights (2004) offers a view of scholarship in relation to departmental project work; Silver (2004) focuses on the running of a particular subject centre's project scheme; Wood (2004) provides an overview of 14 subject centres' approaches to small-scale project funding.

For the purposes of this article, a project is defined as having the following characteristics:

- A clear purpose that can be achieved within a restricted time-scale;
- Clearly defined outcomes;
- A clear end point when the outcomes have been completed;
- A sponsor or funding body who expects the outcomes to be delivered on time;
- Is a one-off activity that would not normally be repeated.
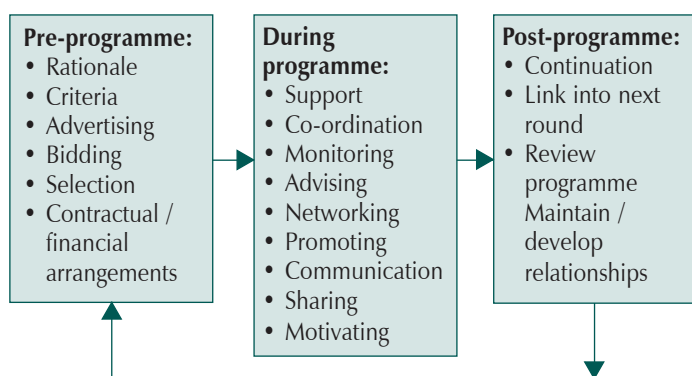
(Baume & Martin, 2002)

Rationale for Providing Programmes of Project Funding

The evidence suggests that the main purpose of providing small-scale project funding is to support the achievement of the priorities and objectives of the funding organisation (HEI or Subject Centre). However, given that these priorities and objectives are directly related to the development of education at tertiary level, then, ultimately, the objective of such funding programmes is to support the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education. This objective can be broken down into the following four areas:

- Knowledge development (curriculum development and research into learning on themes either directed by national or organisational priorities or freely chosen by the project bidder);
- Recognising, rewarding and supporting experts and enthusiasts who teach and support learning;
- Staff development and building the capacity to change;
- Networking, collaboration and the development of relationships and communities (between projects, departments, academics & support staff, institutions etc., this may also implicitly include the aim of 'winning hearts and minds' for the funding provider).

Programme Management Process

In order to achieve these objectives, three phases of activity are required before, during and after the funding programme. These phases map on to the life-cycle of the projects themselves and will often merge into or overlap subsequent rounds of funding.

Pre-programme:	During programme:	Post-programme:
• Rationale • Criteria • Advertising • Bidding • Selection • Contractual / financial arrangements	• Support • Co-ordination • Monitoring • Advising • Networking • Promoting • Communication • Sharing • Motivating	• Continuation • Link into next round • Review programme Maintain / develop relationships

Pre-Funding-Programme

Taking the time to carefully set up the programme of funding has pay-offs later on in the process and will help to ensure that it serves its purpose. Articulation of the rationale, aims and objectives for the programme will aid the development of the bidding mechanisms, project selection criteria and the type of support offered to projects once they commence. In addition, the amount of funding available and the objectives of the programme will have a bearing on the allocation of staff to oversee the programme. For example, a programme of funding that is mainly set up to reward staff for existing excellence or expertise is likely to require less in the way of ongoing support, monitoring and co-ordination than a programme that is focused more on teaching development.

The amount of funding made available by such programmes is variable but the most common range provided to individuals is between one and four thousand pounds (Gibbs et al, 2002). Such funding is used for a variety of purposes in order to achieve the project's desired outcomes, including buying out staff time, employing a researcher, technical support, production of materials, travel, conference fees etc. The amount of funding available can be critical to the success or timely completion of a project, for example £5000 can pay for assistance to be 'bought in', whereas £2000 usually means the project being done in the teacher's 'spare time'.

Other considerations at the pre-programme stage include advertising (to ensure that information on the programme reaches the widest audience), bidding mechanisms (size of bid documents, information required, deadlines etc.), project selection and feedback to unsuccessful bids. Support for potential projects can be offered at the bidding stage, including individual or group guidance on bids (e.g. through one-to-one consultancy, workshops etc.), technical advice, bringing project teams together, offering advice based on previous experience, encouraging inter-departmental or inter-institutional collaborations and linking past successful projects with staff new to the process.

During the Funding-Programme

Contractual arrangements and the processes for release of funding are variable between Subject Centres and HEIs depending on the institution's systems and procedures and, again, on the purpose of the funding. Split payment of funding is often employed where an incentive is required to ensure project outcomes are delivered within a reasonable time-frame; projects are given a first instalment up front and the final amount when the required outcome (e.g. report) is delivered. Time is often the key limiting factor for any project and "in practice staff named in project bids can find it difficult to allocate the time necessary to undertake the bid and so formal agreements about workload plans can be useful" (Gibbs et al, 2002). Additionally, some programmes require the signature of the Head of Department on the bid document to demonstrate the department's commitment to the proposed project.

Different projects require different levels of monitoring and support during their lifetime. As Gibbs et al (2002) noted: "to some extent it is necessary for teachers to find their own way and they will probably learn quite a lot from re-inventing the wheel and making their own mistakes. In some contexts there are unique local features so that existing practice, or existing research findings about the practice, have limited applicability. However, it is often the case that general principles, common problems and cunning solutions are all well documented, and ignoring this will greatly limit the potential for the progress of the projects." This sentiment applies equally to the content of the individual project, the process of project management and to the running of the funding

programme as a whole. For new programmes, it can take several rounds of funding to establish the preferred / most effective balance between project autonomy and a managed programme. For both HEIs and Subject Centres, as the programmes have developed they have moved away from simply 'handing out cash' towards a more co-ordinated and supportive approach.

When difficulties arise with projects, these can be managed supportively and deadlines / outputs re-negotiated, but only when the project communicates adequately with the funding programme's staff. Establishing good relationships with project teams is, therefore, very important. It might be considered harder for Subject Centres to achieve this due to the widely dispersed nature of the projects across the UK but the mechanisms are very similar to those employed by HEIs. Support activities include:
- meetings with groups of project leaders to enable networking and sharing of practice;
- visits to individual project leader's departments;
- individual consultancy to develop bids into plans;
- workshops on project management, evaluation and dissemination;
- dissemination assistance (newsletters, events, requiring final reports, materials on web-site);
- brokering collaborative work;
- workshops or 'swap shops' to share project outcomes;
- ongoing, informal monitoring and guidance (via meetings, email, phone etc.).

Post-Funding-Programme

Funding programmes tend to run on an annual basis, often overlapping as projects run over the originally specified deadlines. This overlap can be exploited by taking the opportunity for new project leaders to network with and learn from those funded in previous rounds. The suggested definition of a project indicated that they were one-offs, however, some HEIs and Subject Centres have explored the provision of continuation funding to further develop the project's outcomes and also the idea of 'implementation' projects, whereby the outcomes from a project within one department or institution are adapted for another.

Perhaps the most important post-funding process is that of reviewing and evaluating the programme, and applying any learning to the next round of funding and support. Reflection on the rationale, aims and objectives may also help identify ongoing activities for the funding programme such as the maintenance of the networks and communities of practice that have been developed in each round of funding.

This article has looked at programmes of small-scale project funding almost entirely from the point of view of the funding provider in order to offer a starting point for others considering offering such programmes in the future. However, of course, the programme of funding as an activity cannot be separated from those individuals involved. For example, the funding organisation's staff

need to be allocated an amount of time for running the overall programme that is appropriate to the objectives of the scheme. Additionally, as part of the review and evaluation process, it can be useful to study the motivations of teachers for applying for project funding, and the opportunities and barriers they face once they the project is underway. This information can then be fed back into the programme management process to inform the approaches to project support and guidance.

Conclusions

In general, reviews and evaluations of small-scale project funding indicate that it is received very favourably by academic practitioners and that is has a valuable place in learning and teaching development, as exemplified by the following two quotes:

"Overall smaller funding allocations may be best used to develop a culture of grass roots innovation, to engage as many people as possible and to develop communities of practice."   *(Gibbs et al, 2002)*

"It is important for the Higher Education Academy to be reassured that this wide and varied group of leaders of small-scale funded projects felt it important for the Academy to continue to plan for funding of such projects. They saw these as a valuable stimulus for teaching and learning developments which can in various ways have impact within a department and disciplinary community, and have influence across subject centre and disciplinary boundaries."   *(Silver, 2004).*

Equally, if managed successfully, small-scale project funding can provide benefits for the funding organisation that far outweigh the direct costs of offering the grant. These may be both tangible, e.g. project reports, case studies, learning materials etc, and intangible, in the form of improved relationships and networks, and enhanced status for teaching development.

Although Subject Centres and HEIs are operating with different groupings of academic communities and within different geographical boundaries, many of the practicalities, processes and politics of running programmes of small-scale project funding are the same. There is value, therefore, in developing opportunities for educational development units (and other HEI-based funding providers), Subject Centres and any new groups, such as the CETLs, to get together and share experiences and practice in both this and other common types of activity. Such shared learning, as offered indirectly by this article, can provide valuable insights into the process as well as offering fresh perspectives, hints and tips.

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Book Reviews

Education in Cyberspace
Land R and Bayne S (eds.)
(2004).
Abingdon, RoutledgeFalmer.
£22.50.
ISBN 0-415-32883-7. 192pp.

Nobody knows you're a dog, so you've got some freedom. Your reviewer pricked up his ears at this message for online teachers and students. But 'education in cyberspace' might relegate your body to 'meatspace'. Then again it might not, because of 'the incorporeal fallacy'.

This book contains a mixture of the eye-catching - 'Nobody knows you're a dog' is a chapter title - the challenging and the obscure. A collection of essays arising from a symposium in 2002, its stated ambition is to "begin to address the need […] for more fully theorised perspectives on the emergent cultures and pedagogies of education in cyberspace." (p.1) Note the careful and elaborate style there, typical of much of the book. Note, too, the focus – theory. The collection is distinctly academic in tone, and substantial sections will require hard work from readers unused to the language of social theory.

Some of the topics covered are: the university in the age of ICT; the identities of online learners and teachers; implications for the teaching of history; 'metadata'; dealing with multiple online audiences; policy and design contexts of networked learning; the influence of virtual learning environments on pedagogy; the 'all-seeing' monitoring of students and staff in some online environments. Like many assembled contributions by multiple authors, it is somewhat eclectic. In addition, the intended organising structure of sections on 'cultures', 'discourses', 'environments' and 'subjects' seems rather arbitrary. Most readers will probably ignore it and simply choose papers reflecting their existing interests.

Your reviewer, with a variety of roles in the day job, had his fancy tickled in several ways. For this employee of an institution contemplating strategic expansion of e-learning, Caroline Pelletier's chapter was timely, going to the heart of what a university is about. For example, should the technology be used to create novel, democratic, participative curricula or simply to equip students with technical skills for the economy?

As someone soon to be involved in reconsidering his institution's virtual learning environment (VLE), it was worth being reminded by Glynis Cousin that VLEs are probably not pedagogically neutral and that it may take effort to counter their in-built bias towards a didactic approach to learning and teaching.

As a teacher, I appreciated the chapter by Christopher R. Jones. He is correct that I am in the position of gatekeeper, with considerable discretion over whether and how I use technology with my students. I still have some autonomy! But so do students: Jones also points out that they can interpret tasks in ways that are unpredictable and that this unpredictability is likely to increase with the introduction of wireless networking and computers becoming available everywhere.

As an e-tutor interested in reusable 'learning objects', Martin Oliver's paper on metadata (descriptions of electronic resources and how they might be used) fascinated me. Oliver makes the arresting claim that developments in this (to some) dull and arcane topic could pose a major threat to academics - being marginalised by a new breed of instructional designers. Reason to worry? Enough to explore his argument in full.

Summing up, the book is likely to appeal most to those keen to underpin their knowledge of strategy, policy and/or practice in what is usually known as 'e-learning'. It is often thought-provoking on matters of educational philosophy, so postgraduate students, in search of depth for their thesis, could find it useful. In addition, as the personal illustrations may show, different parts could interest readers with a range of roles in the e-learning field. However, it is emphatically not a 'cookbook' or source of directly applicable ideas for an e-tutor, and it is not an easy read.

Am I a dog? Discuss.

Bob Rotheram
Nottingham Trent University
9 December 2004

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Ethics in Research
Ian Gregory

London: Continuum, 2003.
ISBN 0-8264-6477-7
Paperback, 80 pages.

This exploration of ethical issues in research is a little gem of a book. The whole idea of ethics in research is seen, at best, as an appeal to professional or funding bodies to judge the status of our proposals for us, or, at worse, a bureaucratic nightmare and the worst kind of time-wasting concession to meaningless political correctness; which is exactly why Gregory's short monograph on ethics in research is such a breath of fresh air. Intended as an introduction to ethical issues in social and educational research, this book goes much further and offers a passionate defence of morality itself. Its main aim is to encourage new researchers to become sensitised to the problematic issues raised by conducting research and to encourage researchers to take personal responsibility for their conduct and approach to these complex issues. The book discusses the main issues one would expect to see in such a volume, including a definition of what constitutes research, the appropriate aims of research, main ethical concepts relevant to research such as consent and confidentiality, etc. However, what makes this contribution stand out is its honest and passionate account of why morality matters, a topic which applies not only to any kind of research, but any kind of human endeavour.

The author realistically recognises that much of research is characterised by tedious, repetitive, hard work, however this is "hard work that says something about us as individuals" (p.25). Underlying any worthwhile and well-conducted research project are fundamental human ethical concerns; an obligation to other people to respect their dignity, an obligation to one's colleagues and professional community not to bring the community into disrepute and uphold its standards and an obligation to our very selves to behave morally. The author challenges us to recognise and fulfil these obligations. Crucially rather than setting the demands of morality as contrary to the aims of research, Gregory sees the two as part of an intertwined objective. Research aims at knowledge, truth and understanding, but these goals can only be achieved and respected if approached with honesty, integrity and by taking the intellectual demands of the discipline seriously. Thus, there is no conflict between research and the ethical obligation to report one's findings truthfully, even if realistically, in practice, humans will find it hard to live up to their obligations, prone as they are to self-deception, undue attachments to causes and wishful thinking, for example.

The onus for recognising and making decisions relating to ethical problems in research remains with individuals. The responsibility is one which the researcher takes on as an integral part of the research. However, these individual decisions are of a special kind, as they must be subject to justification and supported by sound reasoning. Gregory makes this point excellently when he writes: "Whatever the final status of moral judgements, there is no reason to suppose that in the moral sphere anything goes. It is always appropriate to ask individuals to justify their moral choices and actions. The clear expectation is that reasons should be forthcoming for choices made and actions undertaken in the name of morality" (p.70).

Gregory's message is clear and compelling. His writing style is fluent and speaks of the passion he feels for the subject, a passion which he is certain to transmit to anyone who picks up this book.

Nafsika Athanassoulis,
University of Leeds, UK

Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity: Curriculum Matters

Christine Talbot, University of Leeds

Let me begin this article with a question. Do you and your colleagues do the following things?

- Value the diversity included in the student body
- Consider, in terms of coursework, resources, and so on, how people and places are represented and whether or not they are stereotyped
- Assess and revise your teaching methods periodically
- Consider what are the most appropriate methods, timing and formats of assessment for the students you teach
- Assess whether the materials you provide for your students in both print and web format meet the current accessibility standards for disabled students

These are just some of the items in the 'Checklist for Good Practice' included in Appendix 2 of the recently published SEDA Special No.16, 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity: Curriculum Matters'. For those of you reading this magazine, I'm confident that the response to the question above will be a resounding (and even indignant) 'Yes, of course!'. But what of your more inexperienced colleagues, getting to grips with the combined demands of teaching, research and administration, or of those colleagues who have firmly entrenched views as to what constitutes an appropriate curriculum in their subject discipline? How much time might they devote to the above type of reflective practice? How many staff will enrol on a face to face course on 'equality' issues - mainly the enthusiasts and champions, perhaps, who (important though they are), may not be the ones with the greatest needs? The new SEDA Special provides a flexible and stimulating way to encourage all staff to consider these issues (perhaps for the first time for some people) and to implement some of the ideas in their day to day practice.

Whether you are a staff developer, a head of a faculty or a department, or working in part of the Higher Education Academy's Subject Network, you might consider being proactive in trying to ensure that staff meet the curriculum needs of a diverse student body by providing copies of this new workbook for staff to study at their own pace, in a place and at a time that suits them. In some instances it might be appropriate to have some form of mentoring system in place for those using the guide or to run follow-on face to face small group sessions, where the issues raised can be discussed in greater depth and more detailed help provided on specific issues. Or it might be used by those following some form of HE Academy accredited course in teaching and learning in HE, as at the University of Leeds (about which more later).

Why the guide is needed

One of the four main purposes for HE, as set out in the Dearing Report (NCIHE 1997) is: 'to play a major role in shaping a democratic, civilised, inclusive society'. Various more recent Government-backed initiatives, including the widening participation (WP) agenda, have encouraged developments in HEIs that have resulted in a much changed demographic analysis of both staff and students from that of a generation ago. The emphasis of HE (in common with all other sectors of education) is gradually shifting towards the mainstreaming of issues of diversity and inclusivity, although the current WP initiatives are intended primarily to address the issue of inequality in educational attainment by those from the lower socio-economic groups.

However, whilst there have been a great many initiatives, and indeed progress, in the areas of staff recruitment and promotion and in the area of student admissions, particularly in the areas of gender and disability, less attention has been paid to the development of a curriculum that is wholly diverse and inclusive. Such a curriculum will make all students feel welcome and valued on all courses and (hopefully) help change attitudes of individuals and thus (in time) the broader culture of our society. As stated in 'Partnership for Equality: Action for Higher Education' (ECU and JNCHES 2003), 'Education has a central role in developing the society of the future' (p. 7). The new SEDA publication (a completely revised version of the 1999 SEDA Special No. 9) attempts to address these curriculum issues and to fill the gap that seems to exist in providing a basic introduction to this important area.

What's included?

The workbook is concerned with a detailed examination of how to create a diverse and inclusive curriculum, based on educational research in the area of learning styles, approaches, needs and preferences, particularly in relation to age, gender, disability, as well as cultural, ethnic, and religious background. It looks in detail at ways in which those involved in teaching and learning in HE can influence the curriculum in order to ensure that no students are discriminated against in the process of learning and teaching and, further, that all students are positively affirmed as individuals in the course of their studies. The guide is essentially concerned with curriculum content and delivery. Practical guidelines based on good practice in the field of learning, teaching and assessment are included, and there are ample opportunities for staff to reflect upon their own attitudes and practices in this area.

All of this is examined in the context of the current political and legislative climate in HE in the UK. It takes account of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001, which came into force in September 2002, and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, under the terms of which every HEI had to prepare (by 31 May 2002) a race equality policy, setting out the steps required to tackle discrimination and promote race equality and good race relations. A comprehensive list of references and other resources is provided, including many items that are available online at no cost.

Use of the guide in staff development at the University of Leeds

At Leeds, the Staff and Departmental Development Unit (SDDU) runs an open programme of workshops – both on 'Using C&IT in Your Teaching' and on more traditional teaching practices for experienced staff. Both of these include specific sessions on inclusive and accessible practices. Ideas from the new SEDA guide will be incorporated within these face to face sessions. All SDDU sessions have consideration of inclusivity embedded within them. In addition, the diversity checklists developed by SDDU and referred to in the guide are currently being used throughout the School of Healthcare, with staff in other Schools across the University being encouraged to use them too.

For new staff, SDDU runs the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PGCLTHE). One of the first modules on this course 'Essentials of Learning and Assessment' (15 credits at level M) is offered by both face to face (F2F) and open learning (OL) routes. The SEDA materials will be used in two sessions (F2F) and two units (OL) of this module:

- Widening Participation (WP) and the changing student population
- Supporting diversity through inclusive teaching and assessment

Some of the early tasks in the SEDA guide re the student population (numbers and diversity) and the notion of what constitutes a curriculum are incorporated in the OL unit on WP. Specific readings of Sections 5 and 6 are integrated within tasks on the OL version and will be included as directed reading for the F2F participants. The latter will be expected to make a response to an electronic discussion room based on their reading. In addition the SDDU diversity checklists are provided to all staff on the PGCLTHE and they are encouraged to reflect on their practices in relation to them.

Promoting inclusivity

The whole of the guide is based on the premise that in considering curriculum matters, we need to move beyond the issue of simply encouraging a more diverse student body:

'Ensuring equal opportunities in the admissions process has no purpose if students do not have full access to the curriculum of the course they are studying.'

(Skill 1997, p. 53)

An inclusive curriculum is one in which all staff and students feel valued, irrespective of age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religious or personal beliefs, background or personal circumstances. It is also one to which all staff and students need to be committed. It requires effort on the part of all staff to ensure that such a curriculum is part of the student experience, whether studying with regular face to face contact with staff and

peers on campus or via various media off-campus. It ranges from considering the practical issues that have to be addressed for a disabled student on fieldwork to ensuring that all learning materials provided to all students are non-biased, and it includes consideration of the best format and mode of delivery of those materials, especially for distance learners. However, we need to go beyond simply coping with diversity and practising inclusivity, in the face of an increasingly diverse student population and pressures to be more responsive to student needs, and move towards creating HEIs in which diversity is encouraged by positively promoting inclusivity.

'In a University the essential meaning of access must be "access to the curriculum".'

(Borland and James 1999, p. 94)

Creating an imaginative curriculum

In the many years that I have been involved in the delivery and support of learning and teaching, it has always been clear that all teachers need to be creative. In the course of writing the original and now this version of this guide, it has become even more apparent that an inclusive curriculum is essentially an 'imaginative' curriculum[1] . With a little forethought and a good deal of lateral thinking it should be possible to make the curriculum accessible. Hopefully this guide will provide the stimulus needed for creating a meaningful and imaginative curriculum for all students.
The intention is that it will provide a source of useful material that will provoke much thought and ultimately good practice, which will enhance teaching and students' learning in your institutions.

Acknowledgement

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[Includes 12 pages of details of organisations from whom advice can be obtained, and a list of useful publications.]

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[1]A term also used by Norman Jackson and Malcolm Shaw for their LTSN (now HEA) Project, launched in January 2002, see www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre/index.asp?id=21195.

Educational Developments Dialogues . . .

…in which an Experienced (if not always expert) staff and educational developer converses with a *New, and probably younger, colleague*

David Baume, University of Leeds

Being scholarly

Did I tell you I had a dream?
Er…
Don't look so worried. It was about work
Now *I'm worried! What was it?*
I dreamed I read a University document - a strategy paper, a course proposal or handbook, something - that contained references.
That would be references other than to HEFCE or QAA publications in University strategy documents, and other than reading lists in course
handbooks?
You get my meaning.
Was it a nice dream?
Yes and no. I felt a great peace - the University was at last becoming an academic institution in its processes as well as in its content.
And no?
If it was a dream about the future, then we had a stack of work to do. Nice work, though. If it was a dream about the present, then we were probably redundant. One of us at least.
The cheap one or the experienced
one?
The dream wasn't clear on that.
So apart from feeling ambiguous about this dream, what do you intend…
…I'm going to make it happen.
Sorry? How?
Starting here, starting now, the educational development unit will never again make a suggestion or recommendation, issue a plan or draft a strategy, which doesn't back up its ideas and recommendations from the literature, where such a literature exists.

You're…

…serious. Look, we sometimes grumble about academics not being as scholarly about their teaching as they might be. We developers read books and go to conferences about our work as developers work needing to be scholarly. But, despite the best of our efforts, '**scholarship in** teaching' is often heard as '**research into** teaching', and…

…ditto for development.

Yes. Now. What's our next writing job?

Completing our input to the revision of the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

Perfect! What are our themes?

Making sure learning, teaching and assessment are coherent and consistent.

Or to put it in a more scholarly way…

…ensuring what Biggs calls

'constructive alignment' *(Biggs 2003 Chapter 2)*

Exactly! Other themes?

Further extending the uses of personal development planning…

…Informed by research data and guidance available through the LTSN Generic Centre (2003), Gosling's SEDA paper (Gosling 2003). And also encouraging departments and programmes to look at the rich variety of examples and case studies on PDP at the Centre for Recording Achievement website (CRA 2003). I'm going to enjoy this!

……..

You get it, but you don't look happy. What's the worst that can happen?

The Learning and Teaching Committee can take all the references out again.

They wouldn't dare! Why can't a University be scholarly about its own processes? Do we really believe in

scholarship? Or is it just something we preach? What are we, scholars or mice?

David Baume
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AP(E)L: counting credits or learning process?

Rosemary Buchanan, Anglia Polytechnic University

It has been suggested that AP(E)L plays an important role in the social and political agenda of achieving widening participation in higher education (QAA, 2004). With regards to accreditation, AP(E)L should be a link between curriculum development and the assessment and learning outcomes in the student's learning experience. However, it seems AP(E)L is often not clearly understood both by curriculum developers and admission tutors, who often see it as an overly complicated exercise to count credits and an addition to an already over stretched workload. The suggestion in this article is that if AP(E)L is put in the context of the student's learning process it would be more acceptable as an integral part of the student's programme and graduateness and therefore the learning experience. Thus curriculum developers and admission tutors may feel more inclined to be involved in AP(E)L because they see the relevance of it.

First, defining AP(E)L is the easy part, APL being the Assessment of Prior (certificated) Learning or perhaps more usefully APCL and APEL being the Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning, thus AP(E)L being the collective of both. APEL involves the student to reflect on learning that has taken place during relevant experience and then demonstrating that learning in a form that can be assessed. Unfortunately when referring to AP(E)L the spoken word makes the 'e' silent, causing the first confusion, easily clarified by verbally specifying certificated or experiential. It is essential to establish that

students also understand this so that a common language can be utilised.

Many students wish to claim credits for both APL and APEL, and the academic evaluation is best commenced with an assessment of certificated learning, moving onto experiential learning. Certificated learning underpinned by a transcript is easily evaluated as it states the level and number of credits achieved. The important step in this process is to assess the relevance of the learning to the programme to be undertaken. All too often the assumption is made that all credits can be used, however to maintain quality in the process of certificated APL careful consideration must be made to map outcomes from the prior learning into the proposed programme. It has been suggested that this can be defined as general and specific credit (Wailey, 2002), meaning that general credit is all the academic credit achieved by the student and specific credit is a proportion of that credit that is specific to the programme the student proposes to commence.

Having established the certificated learning, attention can be given to assessing experiential learning that has occurred for the student either in the workplace or appropriate life experience. Experiential learning in adult education is understood to involve cognitive reflection upon concrete experience (Fenwick, 2001). In order to assess this often-debatable concrete experience, careful

discussion is necessary to establish learning that has taken place from the student's experience. It is important to note that it is the learning not the experience that can be accredited and there must be a framework to map the experiences against such as module outcomes. Baty (2003) discussed the merits of APEL, concentrating on the experience the students were using in APEL claims thus underestimating the importance of learning that had taken place because of the experience. This leads to misrepresentation of the APEL process by decontextualising it and forgetting the quality assurance involved in the process.

During the initial APEL interview an appraisal of the experiential learning a student has gained is required. At this time the student can begin to construct meaning and transform experience into knowledge through their conversation with the interviewer. Kolb et al (2002) suggests this 'conversational' learning can illustrate how experiential learning provides a holistic model of the learning process and a multilinear model of adult development. This is because these models are consistent with what is known about how people learn, grow and develop. Identifying experiential learning involves some critical reflection, which can then be presented in a format that allows assessment that equates to the assessment of new learning.

At this stage in the process it is worthwhile to remind both academic staff and students alike, that it is learning that is being assessed. This learning is in relation to the whole programme of study not just an entry requirement, which will allow students to waive parts of their programme. This is also the first step in creating the atmosphere of life long learning and laying foundations for a philosophy that all learning is worthwhile whether accredited or not. Eraut (2000) suggests a concept of 'functioning knowledge' which is the knowledge individuals acquire through experience in a profession or occupation. Extrapolation would suggest this is often the type of knowledge being assessed in APEL and thus also links with the concept of life long learning because the 'functional knowledge' is part of the student's life long learning too.

If we believe that the learning process is one which individuals go through in order to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, beliefs, emotions and senses then we should accept that accreditation of prior learning can be part of this learning process. This is because students will have already gone through this process during their prior learning. Jarvis et al (2003) suggests that learning has been regarded as the process of transforming experiences into human attributes or as behaviourists suggest learning can be seen as behaviour exhibited as a result of learning. If students can demonstrate learning either by evidence of certificated prior learning or by the completion of an assessment which exhibits experiential learning, this can be seen as a credible part of the learning process rather than an exercise to count credits alone.

Historically it has been considered that the learning

process involves teaching a curriculum and that there is only one way to teach a curriculum and this has been teacher led. Jarvis et al (2003) suggests that this 'classical curriculum' which assumes there is only one truth, has been undermined because it is recognised that there is more than one possible interpretation of knowledge. It would seem logical to suggest that within this realm of knowledge interpretation AP(E)L could be included. If this is so then it seems that prior learning is a part of the *whole* student experience and is as valid a part of the curriculum as new learning. AP(E)L therefore can form a link between learning outcomes and assessment in the curriculum from both prior learning and new learning.

So is AP(E)L about counting credits or is it part of the learning process? My belief is that with the evolution of the concept of life long learning as a process of learning all through an individuals life, that AP(E)L needs to be seen as more than counting credits. It seems that AP(E)L is a way to evaluate and assess the process of learning an individual goes through and enabling them to communicate this within a programme of study. In turn this allows for accreditation of this learning in a coherent quality assured manner.

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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 on: 0121 415 6801 or via email: office@seda.ac.uk

SEDA Summer School for New Educational Developers

Peter Kahn FSEDA, University of Manchester

The annual SEDA Summer School for New Educational Developers provides a unique opportunity for new developers to explore the field of staff and educational development. People often move into staff and educational development without receiving any specific professional education for their new role, so the Summer School meets a real need.

The 2004 Summer School was held over three days in Stratford-upon-Avon, and organized by Lynn Roberts from the University of Liverpool. Eighteen participants and five presenters spent time looking at what is entailed in development work, and sharing ideas with each other. Some people also took the opportunity to experience the charms of the town!

The programme was designed to cover the practical issues within work as a staff and educational developer, and to provide some space for participants to step back and consider the nature of the field. The first two sessions provided context, with a focus on what is involved in educational development and how it can be carried out in a scholarly fashion (with the sessions led by Ranald Macdonald). Several methods were also looked at, including managing change and the use of action learning (both led by Gina Wisker) - as well as development projects and evaluation (both led by David Baume). I took on a session that covered the planning and running of events.   The Summer School always provides space to focus on development of the participants themselves and this year, as well as mentoring opportunities, included a session from Sally Brown on developing the developers. Sally also covered the topical issue of rewarding excellent teaching.

The sessions were based around a variety of different workshops styles, and participants focused on their own work, concentrating on developing the skills and conceptual frameworks necessary to plan, run and evaluate educational development activities to meet the needs of higher education institutions.

There is no doubt now that educational development has moved to the centre stage within higher education. Professional standards for teachers, the Higher Education Academy, funding of development projects, posts in departments to lead on learning and teaching, advances in the use of learning technology – the list goes on. And now we have Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, which will no doubt provide plenty of work for the new generation of developers.

The SEDA Summer School gives new developers from a range of backgrounds the resources, ideas and support to lead and inspire change within higher education.

What participants on the last SEDA Summer School found useful …
- Meeting colleagues, sharing issues with each other.
- Variety of presenters, sessions and styles.
- Specific ideas to take away and put into practice (action learning, evaluation, organizing events, setting goals etc).

Further details
The SEDA Summer School for 2005 will be held from Wednesday 15th June until Friday 17th June at the Ashorne Hill Conference Centre, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire. It will be based on the programme for previous Summer Schools, as well as on the feedback provided by participants. Please contact the SEDA office for further details/ booking form: Tel +44 (0)121 415 6801 Fax: +44 (0)121 415 6802 E-mail: office@seda.ac.uk

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