Educational Developments

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How Educational Development / Learning and Teaching Centres Help Higher Education Institutions Manage Change

Dr David Gosling, Co-Director of the TQEF National Co-ordination Team, and Professor Vaneeta D'Andrea, Director of the Educational Development Centre, City University

You can't be in the business of educational development without also being committed to bringing about change. It's true that your ambitions for change might be on a modest scale, for example to assist a few individuals who seek out your help. But, there is considerable evidence that Educational Development Centres (EDCs) have bigger ambitions. In the survey of members of the Heads of Education Development Group (HEDG) undertaken by Gosling (2001), all the respondents agreed that it was their role to encourage innovation and change in teaching and learning. Andresen (1996) has argued that it is this emphasis on sponsoring, encouraging and promoting progressive change which marks out what is distinctive about academic or educational development. Although there are a variety of activities undertaken by educational and staff developers

> "(each) 'shares a set of values that are indeed developmental, progressive and change orientated, and that this characteristic is possibly what distinguishes them from (most?) other occupational roles in academia, and might be the single characteristic that best represents their unique contribution to academic life." Andresen (1996:41-42)

The HEDG survey seemed to indicate, however, that EDCs varied in the extent to which they felt able to influence change in their institutions. Whereas some seemed to be at the centre of institutional strategies to achieve change, others felt themselves to be much more peripheral, even embattled, within their universities. To some extent this might depend on the approach to educational development adopted (Land, 2000), but it also seems to reflect different levels of success achieved by EDCs in promoting and managing change.

This led us to think about how we could explain these differences and whether there were theories out there in the literature about institutional change which might help to explain the different levels of success (and ambition) of EDCs. We also looked for some ideas about how EDCs could best achieve organisational change. This is a brief exploration of some of the theories we found, which for simplicity sake have been divided into three 'strategies for change' which we have called:

- Power / coercive strategies
- Rational-contractual strategies
- Normative / re-educative strategies.

Power / coercive strategies

As a generalisation it is true to say that power relations always impact on any social

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Obstacles to Change

Recent organisation has resulted in staff development for Learning & Teaching now being part of the remit of the Staff Development Unit. I have strong reservations about staff development for Learning & Teaching being separated from Research & Development activities that inform academic practice. I think we can make it work because of personal relationships and the professionalism of people working in this area. We have suffered from the effects of power, politics, internal reorganisation & financial crisis. Morale isn't high but we have a new Vice Chancellor.

Head of Educational Development
(new university)

organisation and they are always unevenly distributed. In universities the exercise of power is complex, multi-layered and often difficult to understand. It is rarely the case that a decision to make a change by those senior in an organisation can be achieved simply on the basis their authority. It is only in strong power and task cultures-oriented organisations that change can be rapidly implemented. In higher education change has had a tradition of being negotiated. In practice this means that normally wide variety of groups have to be consulted and in some cases persuaded, and there has to be a transition period in which the change is communicated, debated and agreed. Although pure power relations are rare in HE, it has nevertheless been argued that strong senior leadership is desirable if change is to be achieved.

As in many other social institutions, power can take many forms in higher education. It may be political, personal or based on rule compliance through bureaucratic procedures and regulation. Power relations are embedded in the structures of universities, however distributed that power may be, but individual academics also have power by being able to subvert, modify or resist requirements imposed on them. In some cases when a change is forced through, the response of individuals (even if they are compliant), will be to subtly alter the impact of the change by their behaviour and attitudes towards it.

EDCs sometimes influence changes in behaviour through drafting regulations which specify, for example, validation / approval processes, or by writing policy statements which become adopted by the university. For example a policy on student feedback, or embedding employability skills in the curriculum may be strongly influenced by educational developers and is intended to direct behaviour change. The ability of EDCs to influence policy in this way depends on their location within the power structures of the university and whether the voice of the educational developers is respected. In practice the application of the policy and the extent to which there are changes in behaviour depends on many other factors, and typically compliance will vary between different sections of the university. Where there is significant resistance to a regulation or policy declaration academics find ways of ignoring, modifying or acting with only token compliance.

Another case in point to illustrate this point is the response of HE staff to the QAA Subject Review process. Where EDCs were involved in supporting staff with this exercise, we were often damned if we did and damned if they didn't. Walking the fine line between carrying out the role of developer and apparently being the agent of an external authority in this context could easily have been seen as carrying out the wishes of senior management to comply with government policies. Foucault reminds us, that the exercise of power brings resistance and in this case if our role as Educational Developers role was interpreted as exploiting the power of an external requirement we witnessed a wide variety of resistances.

The processes which impact on the discourse of higher education is a subtle form of power. The language of learning and teaching has become much more permitted in recent years, even approved in certain quarters. The result is that things that couldn't even be said (let alone heard) five years ago are discussed in meetings and find their way into things called 'strategies', for example. Here the role we play in writing the institution's Learning and Teaching Strategy and our input into other institutional strategies is an indication of the potential power we have to influence change within our institutions. The questions we raise (or can raise) such as those listed in Figure 1 (below), can be powerful change mechanisms in their own right.

In some respects, power is a limited conceptual tool to explain why people act and, since universities have very dispersed power structures, it is not possible to rely on power alone to bring change - even when you have the power structures on your side. But if the EDC is completely side-lined by all the ways in which power is exercised within an institution then the capacity of the EDC to influence change will be very limited.

Figure 1

Power over Discourse

- Who is authorised to speak?
- Who listens?
- What can be said?
- What remains unspoken?
- How does one become authorised to speak?
- What utterances are rewarded?
- What utterances are punished?
- What is excluded or silenced?
- What social and political arrangements reward and deprive statements?

Rational-contractual approach

This approach is popular among those who like to adopt a planned process of change. The recent requirement in England for learning and teaching strategies, noted above, implies that having a rational plan with clear goals, identification of the means to achieve the goals, and distribution of tasks / responsibilities is a good way to plan for change. The emphasis in this approach is on co-ordination of actions and roles, alignment between goals and actions and evaluation against milestones and ultimate targets. This approach is also linked to the idea of 'evidence-based practice', namely that actions should be based on thorough knowledge of relevant data.

Obstacles to Change

"The benefits are not always obvious to those being asked to change. Too little thought is given to 'how' and too much to 'ought'. My innovation is just another demand unless I can sell the value convincingly."

Head of Educational Development
(old university)

The rational-contractual approach to achieving change is seductive. Targets, plans and working groups give the impression of dynamic action, and indeed some change can be (and often is) achieved in this way. What lies behind this approach is a kind of positivism, the assumption that all we need to know can be revealed through 'data' and the idea that what needs to be done can be identified by examination of the relevant data - usually by a process of maximising benefits on a utilitarian basis. There is also the assumption that universities are based on a kind of 'contract', like the 'social contract' made popular by philosophers such as, Locke and Rousseau in the eighteenth century or more recently by the American political philosopher John Rawls. This view suggests each person has a role and place to fulfil in an organisation which includes the performance of certain duties. In return for carrying out these duties they receive some level of financial and social security.

The attractiveness of this approach has come under severe criticism by, for example Senge, 1990, in The Learning Organisation, who argues that this contractual approach leads to a highly instrumental attitude in the work-place - people only do what they think they need to and with limited commitment. It tends to over-emphasise the rationality of human behaviour and underestimates emotional commitments, loyalties, and identities. It has been pilloried, by some, under the name of 'managerialism', for creating organisations which are over-bureaucratic, over-controlled and under-motivated. In these circumstances a complete reliance on rational planning models will have limited success in bringing about change.

As Educational Developers we can chose to use this approach in our work and in some instances are expected to work this way especially if we are working on policy issues with institutional committees or with a senior manager or social management team committed to using this approach. The drafting of some Learning and Teaching Strategies have been influenced by this style of approach. Major changes such as a shift to on-line learning may be defined in terms of numbers of departments using e-learning or numbers of modules available on-line, numbers of staff using PowerPoint, or providing discussion groups within a virtual learning environment. This way of driving change can achieve results, but may leave many staff feeling alienated and over-managed. In the long run, insensitive managerialism can create resistance and resentment, which may make other changes more difficult to achieve. It also means that, if the EDC has driven change against the will of departments, they cannot also present themselves as the friend and supporter of the department in other contexts. There is a choice to be made here. It is not possible to be all things to everybody.

Normative / re-educative strategies

Many educational developers have a strong preference for what might be called the 'winning hearts and minds' approach to change. This attempts to maximise people's commitment and potential through 'training', education, and self-analysis. It is a 'bottom-up' approach to change, the reverse of a power-based approach. It is built on the ideals of collaboration, collegiality, and mutual respect. It attempts to maximise individuals' potential, through team work, and building self-motivation to achieve cultural change (Senge, 1990). It is explicitly opposed to 'systems thinking', such as that employed in the empirical/rational approach, and achieves dispersal of leadership functions through flexible structures and roles to create the autonomy for imaginative responses to organisational problems.

This model is built is on the theoretical concepts of the learning organisation (Senge) humanistic education (Rogers), and reflective practice (Schon). It emphasises individual empowerment and self-realisation. It is attractive because, when successful, change occurs through the willing participation of individuals and it is potentially more embedded in the culture of the institution or department. An educational development strategy to encourage the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) is a good example of this approach. Academics engaged in researching and investigating their practice are undertaking a process of self-critical change. They do so willingly and often enthusiastically, on their own terms and at their own pace.

Despite the attractions of this model there some severe limitations to it. It is difficult to bring about directed and targeted change through what is essentially an individualistic strategy, although this can be mitigated by using teams where possible. Some staff will take-up the challenge whilst others will ignore it completely. As a result the extent and the pace of change may be limited. This approach severely underestimates the power of alternative cultures within the academic environment which are resistant and even hostile to this style of operation. The tough-minded, utilitarian, culture in some subject groups can be severely resistant to what is scathingly referred to as a 'touchy-feely' approach. It also under-estimates power relations which can block and subvert change. It might also be argued that unless there are strong challenges to the status quo a collegial approach can be quite conservative.

Obstacles to Change

"Educational Development was seen as a 'wimp' activity by much of the University until we were able to become involved in mainstream procedures - QA, subject review etc. Establishment of Learning & Teaching committee in 1999 has provided higher profile and framework for being more effective."

Head of Educational Development
(new university)

Four Key Questions

Clearly there is no simple or single answer to the problem of creating change. We leave you with three significant questions suggested by the three models of change we have discussed:

1. How is the EDC linked to power structures in your institution?
2. Does your planning make assumptions about rationality of organisational change?
3. How do you change normative institutional cultures?

In the light of these three models, the related questions we have noted above and the evidence from the recent survey of EDCs, what models of education development are emerging which can best bring about change in your institution? How far can these approaches be combined and when do they cancel each other out? Each of us will probably give different answers to these questions and will define our strategies in our own way. We can provoke your thinking. You must provide your own answers.

Mike Daniel Symposium on Institutional Research

June 27th 2002

What is Institutional Research (IR)? How do we interpret it in the UK context and what does it have to do with quality enhancement? These were some of the questions addressed at a conference, in memory of Dr Mike Daniel who died earlier this year, who was endeavoring to raise awareness of its potential value to UK Higher education.

These questions brought together nearly 50 participants with wide ranging institutional roles. Following a series of tributes to Dr Mike Daniel, the symposium was led by the keynote speaker, Dr Vic Borden, Associate VC for Information Management and Institutional Research at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) USA, one of the leading professionals in Institutional Research.

He provided participants with a comprehensive, informative, eloquent and humorous overview of the subject. (See http://www.imir.iupui.edu/mdmsymp for details of the session.)

One unanswered question was the interfacing of the work of central IR and the more organic action-based research and enquiry undertaken by teachers and teaching teams. This was beginning to be explored by University College Northampton which provided two case studies to the symposium aimed at gaining detailed feedback from students about their experiences of higher education, the impact of teaching on their learning while they were studying and a longer term view of the way they had been prepared for work.

Mike Daniel

These examples of work in progress by Andrew Castley and Sheryl Randall began to illuminate the ways in which IR might be interpreted and contextualised in the UK.

While the gap between North American and UK practice might seem daunting we must remember that the art and science of IR has been developed over 40 years and perhaps the trick for UK HE will be to learn from this vast experience and create the conditions and cultures for IR in a fraction of this time.

For IR to be most effective it seems to require institutional cultures where mission and goals are shared and are connected to decision making and actions and a research endeavor to show that actions work at all levels of the institution.

Growing out of the meeting was a feeling that we can learn much from IR practice in North America and that LTSN could facilitate the building of a network. If you would like to join a learning network to share information about Institutional Research please contact Norman Jackson at the LTSN Generic Centre at: norman.jackson@ltsn.ac.uk. And further information about Institutional Research can be accessed from the Centre's website at http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre/inst_research.asp

Editorial

HEFCE Circular 02/24 outlining the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund is the circular which gives the guidelines for the new institutional Learning and Teaching strategies. HEFCE wants a 'clear strategic alliance between our strategies for learning and teaching, widening participation, and disability, within a framework that has the key objective of maintaining and improving quality and standards in learning and teaching.' The circular continues 'We need to ensure that all HEIs can manage the changes required in the new learning environment.' It is this idea of managing change which is at the centre of this edition of *Educational Developments*.

The quotes above surely ought to put educational development firmly in the frame, if not in the centre, of strategic thinking and organisational change, in our institutions.

David Gosling and Vaneeta D'Andrea discuss the ways in which educational development centres could best achieve organisational change. They present three models for change and challenge us to analyse our own institutional practice for which model can best bring about change in our own specific circumstances.

Roy Seden takes us through the very positive dispersed professional development model of change which is in place at De Montfort University. The Teacher Fellowship Scheme supports excellence in practice and seems to be providing strong evidence of effective change agents supporting systemic movement towards excellence in learning and teaching.

In particular, this dispersed model of educational development acknowledges the existence of separate subjects and disciplines accessing different discourses of teaching leadership, educational development, quality assurance and management in higher education.

Another significant mover for change is the growth of the 'skills curriculum'. Viv Anderson and Saeideh Saeidi delineate some of the issues involved in mainstreaming the Skills for Learning resource at Leeds Metropolitan University. The place of skills development is a major source of debate for most universities, from the level of individual teacher practice to national performance indicators on student employability. The continuing debate about the role of subject specialism and the integration (or not) of skills development is here shown to be mediated by a coherent university approach to the mode, storage, development and delivery of materials.

Change through e-learning is another change in which educational developers must be significantly involved. If you thought you were beginning to have some kind of awareness of the breadth of electronic resources available to us, read Caroline Ingram and Rachel Bruce's detailed listings of JISC / DNER programmes and think again! In the same vein, Amy Pearson gives an e-look at significant web resources for staff development.

This emphasis on electronic learning is encouraging us to see the breakdown in traditional staff barriers and Martin Oliver challenges our understanding of exactly what Learning Technologists do. And Mark Liddiard and Jan Sellars present research findings with regard to academic intervention in student under-performance in examinations.

Julie Hall, SEDA's Development Officer, also discusses change in our perception of the Further Education community as she reviews the first SEDA event targeted at FE.

It seems that the challenge of 'change is constant' is not any more how we manage individual initiatives for change, but how do we position ourselves in relation to our institutional systems for engaging with and delivering against national priorities.

Helen Gale
Educational Developments Editorial Committee

Supporting Excellence in Teaching and Learning Through Dispersed Professional Development

Rev Dr Roy Seden
Department of Quality Enhancement, De Montfort University

How it is, all too often, in our Universities: "valuable activities take place in an uncoordinated and unconnected way: information is collected but not disseminated; problems are identified but not acted upon; changes are made but their consequences are not monitored" (IMCHE Unit 3 Guide, 1998, 8).

This article discusses how a dispersed professional development model, exemplified by the change agency of a Teacher Fellowship Scheme, is supporting teaching excellence in practice. It briefly introduces the model and the Scheme, and discusses the impact of the Teacher Fellows, the Scheme, and the model to date, at a complex multi-site Higher Education Institution (HEI), De Montfort University (DMU).

The model arises from a developmental and organisational rationale, using a professional development typology set against organisational contingency theory (Seden and Clarke, 2001). It underpins the Scheme, which seeks to identify, recognise, reward and develop excellent teaching practice in the University. The context overall is ever changing, but one emerging and relatively constant characteristic is that of dual professionalism, where teaching professionalism and subject professionalism are equal in what is construed to be academic identity. The model and the Scheme seek to harness the powerful influence of HEI organisation by linking it to a shift to emphasising student learning. The core question is whether such a dispersed model is an effective change agent in supporting systemic movement towards excellence in teaching and learning. The impact of the Fellows is thus crucial in this regard, and anonymised empirical evidence is discussed which is organised around the parameters and criteria of the Scheme. The rigour of the evidence comes from the data patterns of Teacher Fellow feedback based on the University Teacher Fellow assessment criteria. The richness of the evidence includes, for example, some Teacher Fellow case study material.

The model uses a professional development typology (Land 2000, 2001) which identifies twelve orientations to academic development practice. The Teacher Fellow, when acting as an educational developer, may take on any orientation but is more likely to take on one of the following six roles. A "Professional Competence" orientation enables staff to achieve a baseline competence in learning and teaching. (eg. Teacher Fellows mentoring new staff undertaking the DMU pathway route to accreditation with the ILT). The "Reflective Practitioner" enables colleagues to cope with a complex and changing organisation by fostering a culture of self or peer evaluation and critical reflection (eg. a Teacher Fellow leading the FDTL3 Reflective Practice (ReP) project). The "Internal Consultant" works with departments, observing / evaluating / advising, often on a long-term basis - (eg. Teacher Fellows working on TQEF funded assessment project work with faculty staff). The "Modeller Broker" demonstrates good practice or innovation through working alongside colleagues - (eg. the "Webwise" collaborative project work of a Teacher Fellow – see later). In the "Interpretive-hermenueutic" approach colleagues interact with each other, offering different views and perspectives, leading to critical synthesis and the production of new shared insights and practice. (eg. the annual DMU Conference hosted by Teacher Fellows; Teacher Fellow meetings). The "Discipline-specific" approach assumes that development is only effective when consistent with, and situated within, a disciplinary community of practice (eg. a Teacher Fellow working together with discipline staff on BEATL, a TLTP3 project).

Such diversity underlines the need in a complex HEI for a professional development strategy with a very strong dispersed element. Otherwise a small group of central professional developers are called upon to play out a demandingly wide range of orientations across the University. This dispersed element requires both quality assurance when a Teacher Fellowship is awarded, and ongoing quality enhancement through the annually evaluated activities of the Teacher Fellows. The Teacher Fellows are key players in this dispersed model because of the pivotal roles they play as leaders and champions of change. To ensure confidence it is essential that the assessment procedure is rigorous, as outlined below.

The model also uses an organisational contingency theory (Dill, 1992) to analyse the strategic and operational life of the university. This posits that the two basic factors to consider are the nature of the environment external to the university and the nature of the core task of the university. Key features relating to understanding the nature of the core task include:

- the primacy of the subject knowledge, and how that can differentiate and fragment the basic units of an HEI;
- the importance of the associated characteristics of those units;
- the often loose yet recognisable attachments and couplings that take place within an HEI between the differentiated units of the HEI.

The sources of differentiation arise supremely at subject or department level within HE and can be very powerful. For example, regarding internal consensus in an academic field, and associated external differentiation from other fields, the subject characteristics of History of Art and Design have changed significantly over the last 15 years. The dispersed model of educational development acknowledges the existence of separate subjects and disciplines, which can be contested and diffuse, as well as different in what is permitted and what is prohibited. In addition the fact that Teacher Fellows are aligned to a Faculty as well as a discipline means they have to access the different discourses of teaching leadership, educational development, quality assurance, and management in higher education. This helps us understand the difficulties that can be encountered where educational development is provided solely through central units. It also emphasises that, what professional development can be provided centrally, by faculty or by department / subject, is a really important issue. Finally it helps us to understand that academics also come to professional development with different needs and understandings, some of which are predicated by the disciplines in which they operate, as well as by their HEI.

The necessary counterbalancing sources of integration need to come from similar or senior levels within the organisation, responding to the distribution of organisational authority in its varied forms, levels and contexts. The ways in which subjects and / or departments are grouped (into faculties, for example) is important, as information flows across groupings are much weaker than within groupings. Thus some form of 'horizontal' linkage mechanism is needed. One example is a cross unit group operating at the 'enabling practice through networks' level, such as the Teacher Fellow network. Another is an integrating department operating at the 'central policy making' level, such as the CLT. These considerations regarding the university's task therefore define and limit the contingent task of a small central unit such as the CLT and emphasise the need for dispersed professional development through networks such as the Teacher Fellows.

The Teacher Fellowship Scheme seeks to identify, recognise, reward and develop demonstrable excellence in teaching practice in the University, which embodies high standards in teaching. It is key to the University's learning teaching and assessment strategy. A dispersed model underlies the Scheme design to enable policy and strategy to become reality, rather than remain rhetoric. Teacher Fellows embody the reality of the scheme. They are awarded for 5 years, and can be re-awarded upon re-

application. They have an annual development budget. The Teacher Fellow is a champion of change, a credible colleague, and is seen as equivalent to a Reader. Some Fellows have received workload remission from their Faculties, depending on Faculty circumstances, but from the next academic year all Fellows will receive a minimum remission. They are active in subject, Faculty, University and external arenas. They are very diverse in their subjects, contexts, interests and characters. However they have all sufficiently satisfied the Scheme assessment and threshold criteria, and there appear to be two overall overlapping clusters of Fellows characterised by interests in:

- a reflective approach to teaching, learning and assessment;
- technology supported teaching, learning and assessment.

The scheme application and award process is governed by a "Teacher Fellowship panel", which includes an external advisor. It assesses Fellowship applicants by a submitted "portfolio of excellence", which is an argued, evidenced and validated assertion of excellence, and an interview with the full panel to test personal impact and leadership potential. Assessment is against 10 excellence criteria for award centred on student learning, and an overall statement of approach to teaching, so demonstrating the rigour of the Scheme. The 4 threshold questions used to judge if an applicant has met the criteria revolve around:

- The reflective commentary on each criterion, and overall, asserting excellence;
- The range and levels of evidence supporting the argued assertions of excellence;
- The range and levels of testimonies validating the evidence;
- The levels of continuous improvement cycles embedded in practice.

To date, some 160 staff have expressed substantial interest, 24 have applied, 18 Fellowships have been awarded, and there are 14 current Fellows from all 7 Faculties and 3 Sites. Eventually between 30 and 40 Fellows are envisaged. Around 10-12 applications are likely this year. The application time-scale has been extended from 6-8 weeks to 9 months to ensure equity within the University's semester based system. Some excellent portfolios have been submitted demonstrating very high quality teaching practice in the University, and most of those not awarded have evidenced some very good teaching practice.

The credibility and equity of the Scheme award process are crucial in establishing, in a complex and large university, that excellent staff, dispersed in the faculties, are enabling student learning and the development of teaching staff, by being credible colleagues. The first three years of applications suggests there is a very apparent divide between those awarded and those not awarded, implying that the assessment process is indeed identifying credible colleagues to work in a dispersed manner. This underlines the confidence the university can have in its Teacher Fellows. To date the most sensitive indicators of excellence, from the 10 criteria, in awarded applicants have been, in rank:

- They share good practice and encourage it in colleagues (clearly most sensitive);
- They approach and organise learning in a flexible and innovative way, which recognises and accommodates learner diversity;
- They design the curriculum to manage assessment so as to enhance learning in clearly articulated ways.

The impact to date of the Teacher Fellows and the Scheme: "Institutional / systemic" evidence and validation. Explicit evaluations to date include:

- The external university Continuation Audit by a panel of the National HE Funding Council which happens once every 5 years. This commended the Teacher Fellowship scheme as one of 4 aspects of the university's life worthy of national dissemination;
- The visit of a panel of the national Institute for Learning and Teaching to accredit a suite of pathways and courses. This included the Teacher Fellowship Scheme, which they complimented highly, and approved for the unusually long period of 7 years.

Both evaluations stressed the importance of "recognising the status of teaching and of disseminating good practice". They implicitly or explicitly commended the underlying strategy of improving student learning through improved staff teaching by the change agency of professional development through dispersed "credible colleagues". A substantial three-year internal evaluation is currently taking place, which will consider the future development of the Scheme. Other "Institutional / systemic" evidence and validation includes:

- A Teacher Fellow being awarded one of the 20 inaugural NTFS scholarships
- The range of national and international activity by Fellows: refereed papers, presentations, and study visits
- Teacher Fellow advice: regarding the new University curriculum; approx. 6 Fellows on the University Learning and Teaching Committee (LandTC); regarding the development of the University LT&A Strategy: regarding the choice of a new VLE; regarding the development of the University MLE; etc
- University conferences hosted by the Teacher Fellows: 2001 - New Directions in Assessment; 2002 - Supporting Student Learning
- University networks: Teacher Fellow group meetings three times each year facilitating cross-Faculty contact; mentoring the DMU Student Learning Award; TQEF related activity; the Conferences; Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees; etc
- Teacher Fellow led workshops have begun, based on conference workshops (e.g. Rethinking assessment)
- The wide range of activities across the University including TQEF, professional development, innovation, etc.

The impact to date of the Teacher Fellows and the Scheme: "Activity / anecdotal" evidence. This is at the heart of this "classroom" based Scheme. Teacher Fellows present an annual report on their activity to their Dean and to the CLT. These richly evidence that Teacher Fellow roles are developing and are evidently very diverse (c.f. roles typology). Part of one such evaluation by Robert Johns shows the flavour of the development work a Teacher Fellow can undertake and the differing orientations (Land 2001 op cit.) necessary in fulfilling this complex role:

"During Semester One I

1. *participated in an externally funded visit to the Ukraine and led sessions that focused on teaching process for newly appointed lecturers.* Here the Teacher Fellow demonstrates a "Professional Competence" orientation to academic development.
2. *introduced idea of student self-assessment to own section and persuaded colleagues to try it for this current academic year - all Diploma in Social Work students now required to submit self-assessment form when they hand in work.* Here the Teacher Fellow is taking on the role of "Modeller Broker".
3. *participated in Department discussion on classroom observation and pushed for acceptance of principle that all teaching staff should be trained as observers unless they consciously opt out - meeting set up with trainers for later in January.* The orientation to academic development being taken here corresponds most closely Land's description of the "Reflective Practitioner".

Further evidence of impact may be considered through a Teacher Fellow Case Study Project, "Webwise @ DMU" where a Teacher Fellow, Dr Malcolm Andrew, is working with colleagues, demonstrating the way in which the dispersed development activity is growing. The project, started in January 2000, runs under the auspices of the university's Teacher Fellowship scheme, and aims to:

- publicise web-based learning as an effective method of delivering learning;
- facilitate the adoption of the technology (where appropriate) by those academic staff who wish to use it.

Progress to date has involved:

- presentations to university staff of WBL material to stimulate interest in the technology;
- canvassing staff on their use of, interest in, and needs for, WBL;
- holding 7 workshops on the production of web pages;
- producing an on-line tutorial to accompany the workshop;
- creating an on-line "help room" to provide support for those staff authoring their own material.

This is a second example of "a credible colleague" who is encouraging staff in his Faculty to develop innovative learning teaching and assessment. He is effectively acting as a "Modeller Broker" by 'working alongside colleagues to demonstrate good practice and innovation'. He is supporting individual colleagues in their development in order for them to work more effectively in the institution. Even on a Saturday his workshop was full! However he would be the first to acknowledge that in his dispersed development role he also values central support. It also underlines that high quality student centred learning requires excellent and developed teaching staff, however much they interpret teaching as being learning support.

There are many other such examples. For example, in the Conferences already mentioned, the Fellows are working in an "Interpretative-hermeneutic" manner. Again, the Fellow awarded the NTFS Scholarship is making many links externally in the national subject community, as well as the FDTL3 ReP project already mentioned, building a body of work as a "Reflective Practitioner". In particular the first cluster of Teacher Fellows has emerged in one Faculty working developmentally with their colleagues, especially in a "Discipline-specific" way. This is an important feature, which will grow. Activity overall is developing in line with other initiatives such as the staff mentoring system, the ILT accreditation pathway, the revised Learning and Teaching Strategy, the TQEF initiative, University and Subject assessment policies etc. It seems that some form of barrier has been passed, in what is inevitably a slow process, not least due to this change in context over the last three years..

To conclude: as Beetham (2001) comments: "Most academic staff will not make radical changes to their understanding or practice of learning and teaching without some face to face encounter, whether this is with a mentor, a learning set, a workshop leader or their colleagues. Within these contexts, flexible representations of learning and teaching practice can be enormously useful at scaffolding change and developing a shared understanding of what is involved". Against this background, a dispersed professional development model is presented as an essential component of the professional development strategy of any complex HEI. Change agents are central to implementing such a model, and this article has considered one way of reliably choosing them in the person of Teacher Fellows. Evidence is emerging of the rich and systemic reality in impact on teaching practice associated with such carefully selected excellent colleagues. In this way confidence is engendered in the reality of this aspect of the University's strategy, and its appropriateness for the diverse subjects, staff and, above all, students, within any complex HEI.

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7th Annual SEDA Conference for Staff and Educational Developers

Forging the Links in Post Compulsory Education:
supporting staff in breaking down barriers
19 - 20 November 2002, The Jury's Inn Birmingham

SEDA
STAFF AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

Conference Aim
The conference aims to build upon the success of previous annual SEDA conferences by providing an environment for participants to reflect upon and share ideas and practices related to delivering, planning, managing and researching educational and staff development, particularly in the light of the Government's 50% participation target.

The Conference
The format of the conference will comprise parallel sessions of workshops, seminars and paper presentations. It will be opened on Tuesday 19th November by Professor Howard Newby, Chief Executive of HEFCE, and close on the afternoon of Wednesday 20th November. Further keynote addresses will be given by Sally Neocosmos, Chief Executive Officer at HESDA, and Geoff Layer, Director of the Action on Access Project based at the University of Bradford. Conference sessions will run under the following themes:

- forging links across institutions, organisations and the work-place
- supporting student progression
- inclusivity
- supporting staff across institutional boundaries.

Who Should Participate?
The conference will be of interest to senior managers with responsibility for developing, aligning and implementing widening participation, learning and teaching and partnership strategies; colleagues involved in staff and educational development; student support staff; teaching and learning fellows; staff with responsibility for HE in FE colleges; those involved with the LTSN subject centres and in teaching and learning and widening participation projects.

Further information is available on the SEDA website at: http://www.seda.demon.co.uk/bham02.html

Skills Support: an institutional approach

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Introduction

This article reports on the development and mainstreaming of the Skills for Learning resource at Leeds Metropolitan University (LMU) in UK. The resource consists of a series of web pages and written guides, covering a wide range of areas. The Skills for Learning project began in 1996 and was evaluated in 1998. The development of the resource started with a base line assessment of the existing provision within the university and best practice in other higher education institutions. A cross-institutional approach was taken. A working group was established with a primary role of contributing to the development of the resource and establishing a permanent legacy for it. The resource was mainstreamed and accepted as part of the university's provision once the project funding had ceased. The article concludes with recommendations for an institutional approach to skills development.

Skills for Learning promotes independent learning and the development of key skills such as communication skills, group skills and IT skills. Key skills are an important element of students' experience at university which also influence their abilities to achieve successful academic targets.

The last decade has seen radical changes in higher education. Employers consider self-reliance skills highly desirable (Hawkins & Winter 1995). Expectations of regular updating in the workplace are becoming the norm and there is recognition that there is a need for a flexible, adaptable workforce in the 21st century. As many writers acknowledge, a focus on the development of undergraduate skill is not a recent phenomenon (Bennett, Dunne & Carre 2000). The concept that higher education institutions (HEIs) should equip students with skills as well as knowledge is not new.

The pressures to bring employability skills into the undergraduate curriculum arose from, amongst other influences:

- The Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative, in 1987, provided funding for initiatives in teaching and learning, for over 60 HEIs. The focus of these initiatives was the development of key transferable skills in students in order to enable them to be 'better prepared for working life' (Hawkins & Winter 1997).
- Dearing's recommendation relating to Programme Specification, key skills, careers guidance and work experience (NCIHE 1997).
- Employers' expectations of what graduates should bring to their employment (Hawkins & Winter 1995; Harvey, Moon Geall & Bower 1997).
- Universities UK (formally CVCP) and the Department of Education and Employment's definition of 'employability skills' (CVCP, DfEE, 1998).
- Government emphasis on making work part of study in HE programmes (THES, 1999).
- More recently the QAA in variety of format eg. Benchmarking Statements, Programme Specifications and Progress Files has encouraged the HEIs to identify, provide opportunities for and to a lesser extent assess skills.

There are also considerable pressures within the higher education sector to develop these skills in students (Drummond, Nixon & Wiltshire 1998, Foley 1999, Fallows & Stevens 2000) but no overall strategy for delivery has emerged. Possible approaches include embedding and bolt-on skills development components to modules in existing degree courses as well as stand alone courses.

Taking into account the above issues, it can be argued that the student population would benefit from receiving explicit training in generic skills, although, there is substantially less agreement concerning the best way in which to bring this about (Bennett, Dune & Carre 2000, Tait & Godfrey 1999). This case study provides one example.

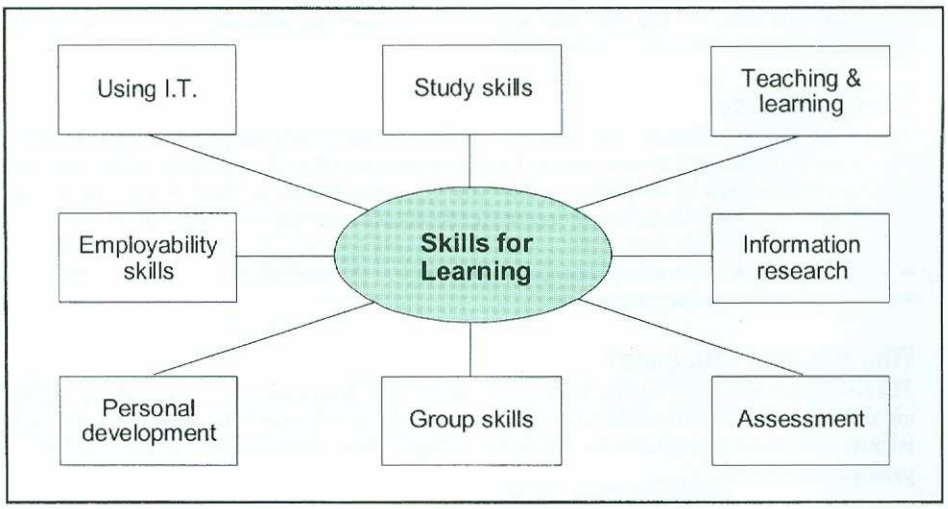
Skills for Learning is a generic resource of materials for use by both staff and students at LMU. A web site contains a range of study skills materials. The web site is password protected because it contains copyrighted materials. The system uses the Internet for the delivery of online materials and it includes substantial references to resources that have been judged by the Skills for Learning working group to be useful.

The resource also consists of printed guides, in a wide range of subject areas, organised in red (to make them distinctive) filing cabinets within each LMU library. These are sign-posted from the web resource. As shown in Figure 1, the Skills for Learning web site covers 8 major themes. Each theme has been subdivided so that it is possible to work through a whole theme or go straight to a topic of interest. For example, the Employability Skills theme covers the following topics:

- Getting to know yourself
- Conducting a successful job search
- Communicating with employers
- Dealing with application forms
- Writing covering letters
- The curriculum vitae
- Finding out about:
  - skills for employment
  - informational interviews
  - career fairs.

These resources are both web-based and printed and can be used by academic staff in the delivery of key skills within the curriculum. Equally, they are designed for students to browse and use independently at their point of need. In the

Figure 1 - The structure of the Skills for Learning site



development of the resource the different needs of various courses and the needs and expectations of the university's diverse student population were considered.

Development

Context: The Skills for Learning project began in 1996 and was given funding from internal development funds for a year. Whilst it was under way there were other, parallel and major developments both internal and external to the university. The main internal development was an important paper on Changes in Educational Practice (LMU 1996) which had major implications for the project. Among its far reaching measures was a proposed change in module size and the introduction into the curriculum of key skills. The external context was one of parallel development and discussions in the higher education sector which included the debates around 'graduateness' and the Dearing Report (NCIHE 1997).

Purpose: The purpose of the project was to develop a coherent university-wide approach to the development of skills including the mode, storage, development and delivery of materials. The design of a central resource delivery system with a limited but significant range of materials for access by students was seen as the first step on the way to a versatile, adaptive and flexible response to the needs of students. The resource was intended to have wide application, spanning generic skills at all levels of study - from basic skills at entry level to research skills at masters level. A full description of the project's aims and objectives discussed in Skills for Learning: Final Report (LMU 1997).

Approach: It was crucial to the success of the project that all academic provision areas were involved in the process of undertaking the project. Accordingly, a cross-university team was set up, largely selected through direct negotiation with all academic departments. Most members of the team expressed personal interest in the work and were therefore self-selecting. The team was drawn from all faculties and from Learning Information Services. Some members of the team had expertise in IT, others worked with mature students entering higher education for the first time, some were single subject specialists and others had a more general background. Typically, members were released from their normal commitments to the project for one-day a week, the project co-ordinator was seconded on a 0.5 basis. Skills were identified through an audit of existing provision within LMU and an audit of best practice in other higher education institutions (for example, de Montfort University and the University of Sunderland). In addition, the external and internal audit enabled the team to collect together materials held internally and supplement them with materials from elsewhere.

Outcome: A resource was set up using the university's Intranet in the first instance. Team members took responsibility for developing the themes and technical expertise was secured to develop the Intranet delivery system. The resource provided a range of materials arranged in eight themes as shown in Figure 1. The themes are further subdivided and comprise in the region of forty different items.

Evaluation: The Skills for Learning resource has been evaluated with students and staff on two occasions. The initial evaluation was carried out following the completion of Stage 1 in 1996. The results indicated that students supported the concept of such a system of providing study skills support. The system was further developed to incorporate the suggestions for improvement made by participants. Those staff who participated in this stage of the project were in general agreement that this was an appropriate approach to take to the development of skills. The resource was further evaluated during the period of January 1998 to February 1999. The results indicated that by this stage both staff and students were logging-in to the site. (A full account of the findings of this stage is discussed in the Skills for Learning Project: Stage 2 Report LMU, 1999).

Currently, the Skills for Learning web site is being evaluated by off-campus learners and development will continue based on these findings.

Mainstreaming

Clearly the continued success of any resource depends on its being accepted as part of university provision once project funding ceases. In this case mainstreaming was achieved through persuasive debate and intense lobbying supported by a number of other initiatives. These included an internal university requirement that skills development should be included in all courses. Additionally, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) requires higher education institutions to indicate how they are supporting student learning.
Discussions with the university's Senior Management Team centred on the following points: a considerable amount of time and resources had been invested in the development of the project and had resulted in a tangible resource; the resource had been evaluated with a number of staff and students and been recognised as being successful; members of staff had been using the resource from the beginning, as soon as the site 'went live', and had started embedding it into their course modules.

Another factor in supporting mainstreaming was the cross-university nature of the project team. The team members encouraged the use of the resource within their departments and this was backed up by an intense publicity drive.

The cross-institutional approach meant the resource was not owned by one academic centre alone. However, it was clear that there was a need to identify a department to take responsibility for co-ordination, evaluation and development of the resource. At the time other developments were taking place in Learning Information Services (LIS) e.g. the Student Information Portal (SIP). Therefore, it was considered the most suitable department to host the project and steps were taken to ensure that LIS would take responsibility. Currently the resource is co-ordinated by two teams – An Academic Support Team and a Technical Support Team.

The roles of the Academic Support Team are to:

- Manage and develop the academic content and context of Skills for Learning
- Deliver training in the use of the resource to interested staff
- Raise awareness of the resource among staff and students
- Enable staff to contribute to the contents of the site
- Publicity
- Facilitate the Skills for Learning Advisory Group. This group is responsible for advising the Learning Information Services on how print and web based learning resources should be developed to meet the needs of the University's academic programme.

The roles of the Technical Support Team are to:

- Maintain and develop the web based system
- Keep content production/publishing streamlined and efficient
- Work with content providers to produce material developed for online use
- Implement accessibility features to enable configuration for users' individual needs.

The two teams complement each other, bringing different skills and strengths which ultimately leads to synergy and therefore a better developed resource.

Recommendations

The recommendations for an institutional approach to skills development are based on this experience and on the formal and informal feedback from staff and students. Effective development and mainstreaming of the resource requires commitment at three levels – institutional, staff and students. The following activities are needed.

Needs analysis: Carry out an initial comprehensive needs analysis involving the institution, students and staff to establish base line needs. The initial analysis carried out at the beginning of the project provided invaluable data and the subsequent development of the resource took these into account.

Cross-institutional approach: Adopt a cross-institutional approach to ensure collective ownership by involving all departments in the devel-

opment of the resource. This approach encouraged staff at LMU to contribute materials and provided an environment to create networks. The existence of a cross university project team proved to be effective in developing and embedding the resource.

Embedding: Identify a department to take responsibility for on-going development, monitoring and evaluation of the resource. At LMU the LIS department is responsible for:

- Production and distribution of a comprehensive range of publicity using a variety of networks and techniques
- Establishing a reporting structure that ensures that key managers are involved in the continued development of the resource
- Providing regular training for staff and students in the use of the resource
- Stressing the role of the resource in supporting staff
- Encouraging links with subject specific context
- Offering a variety of media – web based, paper based
- Incorporating the resource with assessments (this is essential).

Dissemination, Dissemination, Dissemination ... Dissemination is an integral part of successful management of change. Therefore, it is essential to develop a robust mechanism for raising awareness of the resource. Dissemination is an ongoing process and must be considered during the development and evaluation of the resource. At LMU publicity through posters, leaflets, newsletters, and regular articles in the university's publications, targeting both students and staff, further encouraged the use of the resource.

Developing a resource such as this, which has an institution-wide impact, is not without its challenges. Although it may well be perceived as a 'good idea' by the institution, it is likely that there will be some level of resistance to the use of such a resource. One recommendation, therefore, is that the project co-ordinator demonstrate the ability to be persistent and take every opportunity to lobby.

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Articles which appeared in issue 3.1:

Principles to Support the Enhancement of Teaching and Student Learning
Norman Jackson

A Review of the Impact of Recently Appointed Teaching Fellows
Amanda Jefferies and Indra Jones

A Developers Guide to JISC / DNER Development Programmes (Part 1)
Caroline Ingram

Assessing Portfolios - reflections and digressions
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Update from UniversitiesUK - time for a strategic approach to enhancement
William Locke

Widening Participation
David Thompson

A Development Framework for Evaluating Institutional Change
Frances Deepwell and Glynis Cousin

Dialogues - independence
David Baume FSEDA

Back issues of all the above are available from the SEDA Office, price £5 per copy.

SEDA Awards 2002

It was agreed at the April meeting of the SEDA Executive Committee that a round of the SEDA Small Grants be launched in May under a new name, SEDA Awards.

Information has therefore been circulated to all SEDA members and details of the successful projects will be announced in a future issue of *Educational Developments*.

Articles on two previous projects funded by SEDA Small Grants can be found on pages 19 and 22 of this current issue.

SEDA
STAFF AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

A Developer's Guide to Major National Initiatives - Part Five

This series, edited by David and Carole Baume, is describing major initiatives to support teaching and learning, with emphasis on implications for staff and educational developers.

In Educational Developments 1.1, David and Carole gave an overview of the main HEFCE teaching and learning initiatives. In 1.3, Jean Ritchie described a range of initiatives in Scotland. In 2.1, Barbara Lloyd-Smith and Geoff Layer described work to improve provision for disabled students and to widen participation. In 2.3, Sarah Porter described some of the work of JISC in developing and supporting managed learning environments

Here, in the second of her two articles, Caroline Ingram (with colleague Rachel Bruce) gives us a reference guide offering fuller details and url references to the projects undescribed in the last issue of *Educational Developments*.

JISC / DNER Development Programmes

Caroline Ingram and Rachel Bruce
Learning and Teaching Programme Manager and Infrastructure Programme Manager, JISC / DNER

Learning and Teaching Programme

- Miscellaneous Projects:

INSPIRAL, a study linking Managed Learning Environments/Virtual Learning Environments (MLE/VLE) and digital library developments (also related to JCIEL (JISC Committee for Integrated Environments for Learners) funded programmes) and others in the e-books and pricing strategy areas.

http://inspiral.cdlr.strath.ac.uk/

EBONI: Electronic Books On-screeN Interface, based at the University of Strathclyde, aims to identify and compare the variety of methods which have emerged in the publication of learning and teaching materials on the Web, in order to determine the most effective way of representing information in electronic books whilst Enhancements to HERON Resource Bank, at the University of Stirling, were funded increase the size of the collection of digitised texts.

http://eboni.cdlr.strath.ac.uk/

http://www.heron.ac.uk/index.htm

PELICAN: Pricing Experiment Library Information Co-operative Network, led by Loughborough University, has conducted desk research on the impact of JISC/Publishers Association Pricing Reports, to discover the level of activity in delivery of texts to students and to explore publisher, author and librarian attitudes to the issues raised by these reports.

http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/dis/disresearch/pelican/indexpage.html

- Improving Access to Learning and Teaching Resources (JISC and External providers):

The FAILTE (Facilitating Access and Information to Learning and Teaching resources in Engineering), led by the Institute for Computer-based Learning at Heriot-Watt University, is creating and implementing a unified approach to the assessment, description and cataloguing of and access to electronic learning and teaching resources for engineering.

http://failte.ac.uk/

RESULTS, led by the University of Warwick, will develop a portal resource for learning technology and the integration of C&IT in learning and teaching.

http://www.results.ac.uk/

The ANGEL (Authenticated Networked Guided Environment for Learning) project is led by London School of Economics, though the project operates in partnership with Leicester, Edinburgh and South Bank Universities, as well as EDINA. This project will research and design, produce software, implement, test and study-in-use a web-based environment for learning. This will provide interfaces for all users (learners, teachers and administrators), integrating user access across hybrid library and directed learning information resources.

http://www.angel.ac.uk/

ICONEX (Interactive Content Exchange) is undertaking investigation into the key issues surrounding the identification, description, location, use and integration of interactive content objects. This project, led by the University of Hull, addresses problems associated with the use of interactive content. It also aims to establish a repository of interactive learning content, accompanied by metadata to enable retrieval and documentation to facilitate incorporation of content into teaching.

http://www.iconex.hull.ac.uk/

- Incorporating Learning Materials Into Virtual Learning Environments:

INHALE (Information for Nursing and Health in A Learning Environment), led by the University of Huddersfield, is developing portable interactive learning materials in nursing and health.

http://inhale.hud.ac.uk/

VDML (Virtual Departments for Minority Languages), led by University College London, is developing a framework to support students and teachers of minority languages, since these learners and teachers are often isolated and have few opportunities for interaction with colleagues and other learners. VDML aims to use networked communication tools to provide students and teachers with a new 'virtual department' in which to interact.

http://www.ucl.ac.uk/epd/herdu/vdml/

- Still Images:

Most projects (except FILTER) are clustered in the still images area aim to either create new collections of still images with associated learning materials or to develop existing collections for learning and teaching purposes.

FILTER (Focusing Images for Learning and Teaching - an Enriched Resource), the 'exception', led by the ILRT at Bristol University, will be using established pedagogic aims and learning needs as a basis for understanding the potential of image usage. The project plans to define different image types in order to make the ways in which they can be used to support learning and teaching more transparent. The team are working with the LTSN (Learning and teaching Support Network) to develop case studies and image datasets suitable for use in best practice scenarios.

http://www.filter.ac.uk/

ARTWORLD - Resources for learning and teaching in world art, led by the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts at UEA, relates to the provision of digital images and associated resources in world art studies across a partnership group of museums, art galleries and academic departments.

http://artworld.scva.uea.ac.uk/

The **Designing Britain 1945-1975 - The Visual Experience of Post-War Society** project aims to develop resources for the study of British design from 1944-1975. The project will do this by making accessible unique material from the Design History Research Centre at the University of Brighton, where the project is based, and a complementary collection from the Design Collection of the Arts Institute.

http://www.dhrc.brighton.ac.uk/dca_web_site/project/project.htm

Developing a digital resource of images of 20th-century crafts, the **Crafts Study Centre**, led by the Surrey Institute of Art and Design, University College, will also be creating associated teaching and learning materials. Modern craft is an area which has little material to support it at present.

http://www.surrart.ac.uk/whatshappening/galleries/craftstudy.html

A **Textile Images project**, also at the Surrey Institute, is creating a digital image resource of appropriately selected textiles for teaching and learning purposes. This will seek to complement the digitisation of the Crafts Study Centre collection.

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/dner/development/projects/textileimgs/

The **BuilDNER** project has developed a buildings image database. The project, led by South Bank University, has digitised approximately 17,000 pre-indexed 35mm slides of buildings and architectural features. The collection will be lodged at VADS, and links to relevant LTSN centres (e.g. Built Environment) will be established to encourage use and take up of the collection by the academic community.

http://litc.sbu.ac.uk/buildner/

LTSN **Bioscience ImageBank** feasibility study, which is co-funded by LTSN (Learning and Teaching Support Network) and JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee, aims to identify the real needs of the bioscience educational community with respect to image use and availability. It is expected that the information gathered in the feasibility study will lead to the development of a full ImageBank, which will consist of freely available images contributed by academics, publishers and organisations rights cleared for educational purposes, accessible through this web site.

http://bio.ltsn.ac.uk/

The National Fine Art Digital Collection project is based at The Visual Arts Data Service (VADS). This project which will produce a pilot resource and web site exemplifying work associated with and held within Higher Education Institutions which represent the value and influence of the artist practitioner in Fine Art Education. In the first instance the pilot resource will deliver on-line around 200 digital images and associated metadata made up from work selected from 10 Higher Education Institutions, along with the full digitisation of the Council of National Art Awards Trust Art Collection, which includes work by many extremely important figures in British Art such as Henry Moore, Bridget Riley and Richard Hamilton.

http://vads.ahds.ac.uk/fineart/index.html

- **Enhancing Existing JISC Services and Collections:**

Four projects were funded to enhance existing JISC services and collections for learning and teaching:

The **TASI Image Collections Registry**, based at ILRT, was funded to provide an index of image digitisation projects, particularly those of relevance to learning and teaching.

http://www.tasi.ac.uk/

The **PICTIVA** project, based in the Visual Arts Data Service, is aimed at promotion of the use of on-line image collections in learning and teaching in the visual arts. The project is developing a range of generic tools to support access to the images and targeted materials to support their use, especially with respect to the collections held for JISC at VADS.

http://vads.ahds.ac.uk/learning/pictiva/

Bristol BioMed, based at ILRT, was funded to encourage the use of the existing JISC BioMed image collection in learning and teaching. An **Image Cross Searching** project aimed to provide lessons in cross searching image databases, especially with respect to the BIOMED and HELIX databases.

http://www.brisbio.ac.uk/

- **Moving Pictures and Sound:**

Several projects in the moving picture and sound area are generating new JISC content:

Click and Go Video, led by UMIST, aims to provide a user-oriented resource that will stimulate and enhance the use of moving image archives for mainstream learning and teaching.

http://clickandgovideo.ac.uk/

Hotbed: Handing On the Tradition, led by the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (RSAMD), will centre on the evaluation of the use of networked sound material for learning and teaching.

http://www.hotbed.ac.uk/

LIFESIGN: Networked moving images for the life sciences, led by the University of Glamorgan, aims to evaluate the use of networked moving picture and sound material for learning and teaching in the life sciences. The project will identify and develop a significant collection of video resources in the life sciences in conjunction with the LTSN centres, and work with the JISC Managing Agent for Moving Pictures and Sound to negotiate and clear rights.

http://www.lifesign.ac.uk/

TRILT: Television and Radio Index for Learning and Teaching, led by the British Universities Film and Video Council (BUFVC), aims to extend and improve content delivery from an existing JISC-funded service, by brokering access to a comprehensive broadcast programme database under licence, add relevant content to the data from a further and higher education learning and teaching perspective and deliver it online in a format which will integrate with the developing DNER.

http://www.bufvc.ac.uk/databases/trilt.html

- **Museum and Archive Projects:**

Of several museum and archive projects, two are building learning and teaching resources for geologists:

The **Rhynie Chert** project, led by the Department of Geology and Petroleum Geology at the University of Aberdeen, has developed a web-

based resource for undergraduates based on images and research information about fossil plants and animals from the world's earliest known terrestrial ecosystem, the Rhynie Chert, a hot spring deposit.

http://www.abdn.ac.uk/~gmi265/profiles/rhynie/index.htm

MIRACLE (**Microfossil Image Recovery And Circulation for Learning and Education**), led by UCL, will create a web-based teaching module in micropalaeontology.

The others follow:

Digital Egypt for Universities, at the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology at UCL, will deliver image-led online learning and teaching resources on Egyptian archaeology and history.

http://www.petrie.ucl.ac.uk/digital_egypt/Welcome.html

LEMUR (**Learning with Museum Resources**), led by the University of Aberdeen, will bring together museum objects from the University's Marischal Museum and Natural Philosophy Collection, to create a database of still and moving images and associated data and documentation as well as targeted learning packages.

http://www.abdn.ac.uk/lemur/index.hti

PATOIS (**Publications and Archives in Teaching: Online Information Sources**), arising from JISC's Archaeology Data Service (ADS) at the University of York, is developing four tutorial packs to introduce students to the electronic analysis and use of primary archaeological data resources: monument inventories, excavation archives, research reports and multidisciplinary datasets.

http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/learning/

Virtual Norfolk project, led by the University of East Anglia, is building a unique partnership with the Norfolk Record Office to create a resource providing full-text access to historical documents, map and images from Norfolk from the period 1200-1850.

http://www.uea.ac.uk/his/virtualnorfolk/

- **Enhancing JISC Content for Learning and Teaching:**

One part of the programme is focused on enhancing JISC content services for learning and teaching. Three large projects in this area focus, variously, on the Biz/Ed service, census data provision and tool for using the EDINA Digimap service (http://edina.ed.ac.uk/digimap/), which offers negotiated access to Ordnance Survey data and maps.

The **Biz/ed Virtual Learning Arcade**, led by ILRT at Bristol, will contain a series of online business and economic models and simulations to support learning and teaching.

http://www.bized.ac.uk/virtual/vla/

The second project, **Historical and Contemporary Census Collection Development** (CHCC), is developing the collection of historical and contemporary census data and materials into a major learning and teaching resource. This is led by Manchester Computing at the University of Manchester.

http://www.chcc.ac.uk/

EmapScholar, led by the University of Edinburgh, will enhance the use of spatial data by providing support for learning and teaching with and about Digimap's digital map data.

http://www.edina.ac.uk/projects/mapscholar/index.shtml

Some studies and smaller enhancement projects were also funded in this area, prior to the main call:

One project, called **TimeWeb**, a collaboration between ILRT and MIMAS, is aiming to improve access to key national and international macro-economic time series databanks through a web-based interface.

http://timeweb.mimas.ac.uk/

MIMAS also offers the **Beilstein Crossfire** service, giving access to one of the world's largest collections of chemical data, a further project based at MIMAS is enhancing this service for learning and teaching.

http://www.mimas.ac.uk/crossfire/

The Edinburgh University Data Library, in association with the Data Archive, MIMAS, EDINA and the British Library of Political and Economic Science, has carried out a study into the **Use of Numerical Data** for learning and teaching.

http://datalib.ed.ac.uk/projects/datateach.html

Two feasibility studies, based at EDINA and the HDS, to scope the potential for a **Geo-Crosswalk** gazetteer service and a **Geo-data Browser** and portal service for the HE community were carried out over the last year. These led to the recommendation that there was a need in the community for such services. Further development for demonstrator services is now underway.

http://edina.ed.ac.uk/projects/crosswalk.html

http://edina.ed.ac.uk/projects/geobrowser.html

Infrastructure Programme

- **Access to Resources Through Resource Development Network (RDN) Hubs:**

Two projects were funded to underpin provision of access to resources through existing RDN Hubs (http://www.rdn.ac.uk):

History Online for Learning and Teaching, led by the Institute of Historical Research at University College London, will provide evaluated online resources, and enhance the History Online resource for learning and teaching, contributing to the RDN's humanities service Humbul.

http://www.history.ac.uk/

The **NMAP - Nursing, midwifery and health professions gateway** project, led by the University of Nottingham, will extend the existing health and life sciences service at OMNI to include nursing, midwifery and other professions related to medicine.

http://nmap.ac.uk/

http://omni.ac.uk/

- **Web-based Tutorial Materials:**

The existing suite of web-based tutorial materials at the **RDN Virtual Training Suite project** has been extended by the Institute for Learning and Research Technology (ILRT) at the University of Bristol. There are now 27 subject-oriented tutorials online designed to help students and lecturers develop their Internet information skills through a self taught, any time, any place learning environment.

http://www.vts.rdn.ac.uk/

- **Z Projects:**

A cluster of 'Z' projects was funded to enhance cross searching of online content and resources using the Z39.50 protocol. Implementation of the Z39.50 software protocol relies on collections and content being associated with adequate metadata and enhanced interoperability across resources relies on standard implementations of the protocol.

The **MIMAS metadata** project, led by the University of Manchester, has created a database of metadata about MIMAS data and information services and has developed a Z39.50 infrastructure using the Cheshire online information re-

trieval system. This therefore provides access to primary metadata associated with datasets hosted by MIMAS.

http://epub.mimas.ac.uk/dner.html

At another JISC data centre, BIDS, a project to add Z39.50 access to the IBSS Online data service, **Z-server to IBSS**, was funded.

http://www.bids.ac.uk

The **Gate-Z** project, led by UKOLN, has developed a Z39.50 to Z39.50 gateway that can be used to interface Bath-Profile clients to non-Bath Profile targets. The Bath Profile is a subset and standard implementation of Z that the JISC promotes to enhance interoperability. By placing Gate-Z in front of content provider Z39.50 servers, they are able to offer Bath Profile compliant targets without having to modify their existing server configuration. The related software development was sub-contracted to Crossnet Systems Ltd. The software developed by this project will be made available on an open-source basis, currently it is free to use but further dissemination is required.

http://www.rdn.ac.uk/projects/gate-z/

The **ROADS** (Resource Organisation And Discovery in Subject-based services) project, funded as part of a previous programme by JISC, had several purposes:

- to produce software which can be used to set up subject-specific gateways
- to investigate methods of cross-searching within and between gateways
- to participate in the development of standards for the indexing, cataloguing and searching of subject-specific resources

http://www.ilrt.bris.ac.uk/roads/

The **Enhanced ROADS Z-Plugin** project, based at UKOLN, was funded under the Infrastructure programme to enhance ROADS interoperability.

JAFER (Java Access for Electronic Resources), led by the Libraries Automation Service at Oxford University, is developing an easy to use "open source" Java toolkit. This 'toolkit for the masses' will:

- allow existing data sources to be published via Z39.50;
- allow the creation of dynamic internet-based learning aids and portals
- enable documents to be ordered and requested via protocols (e.g. ISO ILL).

http://www.lib.ox.ac.uk/jafer/

JAFER will also develop visual tools to hide the technical detail behind making the linkages so that staff can concentrate on the content and pedagogical issues.

Join-up will be exploring emerging linking technologies for article infrastructure services and will provide a point of contact between UK HE developments and wider initiatives. Join-up will work closely with other DNER services who provide access to the journal literature.

http://edina.ed.ac.uk/projects/joinup/

Three projects, **ZBLSA, Docusend** and **Xgrain**, led by EDINA and King's College London are designed to enhance the operation of the JISC information architecture by development of cross searching facilities, journal article document delivery and portals for discovering references through the national Abstract and Indexing databases. The project's outcomes should provide seamless access to journal resources from resource discovery to delivery.

http://edina.ed.ac.uk/projects/joinup/zblsa/

http://www.docusend.ac.uk/

http://edina.ed.ac.uk/projects/joinup/xgrain/

ZETOC provides access to the British Library's Electronic Table of Contents database of over 15 million article titles derived from the 20,000 most important research journals in the world, dating back to 1993. It is updated daily. The database includes a unique collection of over 100,000 conference papers, indexed to title level. The **Z.ETOC** project, led by the British Library and MIMAS, aims to link up to JoinUp in providing access to journal articles.

http://zetoc.mimas.ac.uk/

For more information on any of the above, please contact:

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Information for Contributors

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

The international audience is drawn from educators in all fields and disciplines. You should therefore not assume specialist knowledge, but write clear, straightforward accounts in plain English. When describing projects, please give concrete detail. Articles accepted for publication may be subject to editing.

All material should be submitted to the Editorial Committee via the SEDA Office, preferably in electronic format.

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

Everyone involved with ***Educational Developments*** works on it only part of the time and so delays in dealing with submissions are inevitable. All papers will be reviewed by at least two people and expert advice sought where appropriate.

Articles

Should be between 1000 and 3000 words in length. References in the text should be made quoting the author's name, followed by the year of publication in brackets. Where reference has been made to a number of publications by an author in one year, these should be distinguished by using suffixes: 1998a, 1998b, etc. References should be listed alphabetically at the end of the article, in the following way:

Brown, S and Race, P (1997) **Staff Development in Action**. Birmingham: SEDA.

Saunders, D and Hamilton, D (1999) A Twinning Model for Staff Development in Higher Education, *Innovations in Education and Training International*, **36.2**, 118-127.

Reviews

All material should be sent to the Reviews Editors (see Review pages for details). Guidance for reviewers is available from the Editors or from the SEDA Office.

Reviews should normally be around 300 words; anything between 200 and 400 is acceptable.

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What's it all about, FE? *

How SEDA can help to support the challenges for colleges in delivering the Government's targets for HE participation.

Anyone involved in SEDA committees over the last year will be familiar with an important refrain which seems to enter the meeting usually about half way through when a couple of people begin to mumble quietly, ' but who are we actually aiming this event / conference / publication / accreditation framework at?' Indeed this question is key to any attempt to successfully respond to the needs of a growing educational development community. Additionally this community is of course complex and SEDA must now work alongside a range of providers. SEDA has had to define its role clearly - people need to know what is distinctive about our work. Such a focused approach doesn't mean a sudden change to a niche role or even working within a limited educational community. It does mean being clear about our distinctive contribution to staff and educational development.

For this reason, over the last five years the SEDA Advisory Group and the SEDA Executive Committee have put much thought into defining the SEDA constituency and outlining a strategy for responding to the needs of this constituency while reaching out to those groups new to SEDA's work. In particular people have been keen to explore those areas which might benefit from SEDA's experience of development, of supporting innovation, of networking and of the sharing of good practice.

As a result a key focus of the Development Officer post has been to introduce SEDA to the FE community. There are two reasons for this. Firstly it is clear that the boundary between FE and HE is blurring. Much has been written about FE as a major vehicle in the attempt to reach the 50% HE participation rate by 2010 through a real shift towards greater participation by mature and working class students. Latest HEFCE figures indicate more than 200 FE colleges delivering HE in the form of HNDs, foundation degrees and franchised under graduate programmes. Secondly a Government initiative last year, calling for all FE lecturers to hold a recognised teacher training qualification, has put a huge strain on colleges, many of whom have had to leap into complex continuing professional development arrangements which meet the rigorous FENTO standards for all their new and unqualified staff.

As a consequence there is a real need for a national body such as SEDA to provide a valuable networking and development framework for this work. Indeed SEDA were named as a possible provider for such support by a HEFCE paper last year (HEFCE 04/01). Yet also for SEDA the situation provides an opportunity to develop, learn and be energised by a new membership pool involved in dynamic, cutting edge educational and staff development practice. FE, for example, has a lot to offer the HE community in areas such as inclusive learning, retention strategies and work-based learning.

Caroline Neville, who spoke at the SEDA / HETP event in May 2002

To launch this initiative an event was organised in May 2002 with The Higher Education Training Partnership (HETP), a HEFCE recognised funding consortium embracing Barnet College, Harlow College, Middlesex University, The College of North East London and Waltham Forest College. This event, designed to respond to a HEFCE call for all FE colleges delivering higher education to submit an HE Development Strategy by April, was the first SEDA event targeted at the FE community. Keynote speakers were Caroline Neville, Principal of City College Norwich, who has written extensively on HE in FE, and Gareth Parry, Professor of Education at Sheffield University, who asked what is distinctive about HE in the colleges in the light of his research with Anne Thompson commissioned by the Learning and Skills Development Agency on HE in FE (Learning by Degrees LSADA 2002).

A cursory glance across some of the key themes of this HE development strategy indicates those areas to be supported by HEFCE's HE in FE fund to develop high quality learning and teaching programmes in the colleges:

- Developing student skills
- Developing staff skills
- Improving quality and raising standards
- Curriculum development and design
- Improving quality and raising standards
- Monitoring and evaluation.

Each of these themes was explored in very interesting workshops led by staff from the HETP and, as they progressed, important issues were raised. Common concerns centred upon:

- Whether to mesh or keep separate FE and HE QA, monitoring and evaluation systems
- The difficulties faced by FE staff attempting to deliver at HE level on conditions of service which allow little time for professional development, scholarly activity or even applications for funding
- The need for commitment to collaboration at all levels
- A lack of 'joined up thinking' in terms of data collection and reporting requirements of the range of inspection bodies
- A need for staff development resources – publications and professional development opportunities which map the experience of teaching at HE level with FE FENTO standards.

At the same time there was much good practice to share, particularly in the areas of collaborative curriculum development and staff development, where delegates reported on examples of peer observation and mentoring across institutions, of job swaps and secondments and of exploring new models of widening participation through community based learning and work based learning initiatives. Some delegates also reported on links between the two sectors which were carefully nurtured, through shared staff development events and joint preparation for subject reviews and validations. Many HEIs recognised that FE partners contributed a wealth of experience in terms of skills development, recent industrial experience and a focus on teaching and learning. FECs on the other hand benefited in some areas from shared resources and access to professional development opportunities particularly in the areas of scholarship and research.

As Professor Parry argued, since Dearing, HE in FE has been discovered and thus in national policy terms it seems there has been some recognition of the contribution the FE sector can make to creating inclusive, local higher education opportunities particularly in terms of the widening participation agenda. However, despite the fact that 1 in 9 HE students studies in FE (Closer by Degrees p78), there is also much to be understood about this area of work. SEDA recognises that this involves challenges which need to be addressed and development which needs to be supported. The growth of HE in colleges is complex and any horizon scanning now indicates a real mix of franchised courses, collaborative relationships, foundation degrees and so on. These involve an array of funding and quality assurance arrangements and individual management frameworks. Thus colleges are creating their HE Development Strategies from a range of differing starting points and while the strategies are overseen by HEFCE, college wide structures remain the responsibility of the Learning and Skills Council.

Delegates certainly indicated that there can sometimes be quite a clash between the development needs of those staff working in HE, the requirements and expectations of QAA and the wider staff development and quality assurance arrangements provided at a college wide level. It is with concern that we must note that the QAA annual report this year has reported that all 11 courses judged by inspectors to be failing in 2001 were degree and diploma courses offered by five further education colleges (THES March 15 2002).

The aim of the HE in FE one day event was to provide a framework to share good practice across the sector and begin to sow seeds for a support network between this range of providers. SEDA can offer valuable experience in supporting innovation in teaching and learning across HE, accrediting staff working at this level through, for example, the named award in Developing Professional Practice in HE and FE and via its already established staff development networks. Early sorties into FE territory have already indicated interest in SEDA publications and the annual conference. However SEDA isn't moving into this area in a piecemeal way and if our links with FE are to work SEDA executive is clear that they need to be relevant and proactive otherwise we will miss a real opportunity to secure a clear strategic, supportive role in this key area.

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* With thanks to Chris Hughes, Chief Executive of the Learning and Skills Development Agency who gave his kind permission to use this heading from his article in LSDA Briefing November 2001.

Reviews

Books

Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for University Teachers

Stephen D Brookfield and Stephen Preskill
SRHE and Open University Press (1999)
£18.99 pbk
ISBN: 0 335201 61 X

This book argues for the use of discussion for effective learning and teaching in both practical and reflective terms. The authors successfully synthesise a range of strategies - the 'tools and techniques' of the book's title - with an understanding of discussion as a democratic process. In promoting the democratic ideals of discussion, the book advocates a dialogic model of informed debate without requiring participants to perform with fluency or rarefied academic language. Indeed, they approve the hesitancy and colloquial language of unrehearsed discussion in preference to the learned and articulate conversations many new teachers attempt.

The authors gesture at an expansion of discursive techniques to more empirical disciplines but emphasise that discussion, as with any other teaching method, should be used only when it is appropriate to the learning context. Notably, the examples they cite throughout the text are explicitly related to the humanities and suggest that their anticipated audience remains those teachers working in traditionally discursive disciplines. Many of the techniques - the 'circle of voices', 'buzz groups' and 'snowballing' - will be familiar to practitioners already using discussion in their teaching. As a dip-in resource book, the techniques are both comprehensive and accessible for those new to university teaching and a useful digest for those wishing to vary their standard strategies for group interaction.

The theory of democratic discussion underpinning these competency-based techniques is an opportunity to reflect upon how certain ways of speaking are innately privileged within an academic environment. Whilst aspiring to an ideal of classroom discussion, the authors acknowledge that the undemocratic practices of wider society do impede classroom discussion, legitimising some voices and reinforcing traditional gender, race and class hierarchies. To counter this, they guide the development of discussions that self-consciously seek to efface conservative power structures inherent in culturally diverse groups and across gender differences. The authors, however, maintain the value of learning as a process inseparable from these same realities of social context and personal relationships. This book flags the need to structure social relations within classroom discussion in ways that balance the affirmation of plurality with the possibility of a fair and informed critique of difference.

The authors have achieved an impressive balance between *how* to develop discussion and *why* such strategies are essential to effective teaching and learning. In this book, the teaching techniques are not simply operational but are informed by a clearly defined ideological rationale. Ultimately, it is this model of reflection, of challenging assumptions about teaching and classroom processes, that will have the greatest impact upon the teaching practice of the individual.

Saranne Weller
University of Surrey

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The *Educational Developments* Team

Lesley MacDonald started as editor of our book reviews in the days of *The New Academic* and has faithfully ensured that, every time we go to press, a clutch of reviews are here for us to read. This long-running relationship has now ended with Lesley's departure from Durham University, and this note is to thank her for doing all that work so well and so cheerfully.

In her place Rachel Segal, one of the members of the National Co-ordination Team for the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (based at the Open University), has offered to take on the task, and we are grateful for her enthusiasm.

At the same time we would like to welcome three new members of the group which produces *Educational Developments*: Steve Outram at Staffordshire University, Tony Brand at the University of Hertfordshire, and Mike Laycock at the University of East London.

So if you have ideas, suggestions or criticisms about how this publication is developing, don't hesitate to make contact - we are listening!

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Web-Based Staff Development

Amy Pearson
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Introduction

The use of technology in education now contributes to a large proportion of teaching and learning activities and as a result there is a plethora of information to support developments in this area. As a reflection of this, we are beginning to see the emergence of web based staff development courses which focus on the use of technology in teaching and learning. It is therefore somewhat surprising to find that the use of technology to support the wider, 'non-technical' staff development activities appears to be relatively unexplored, certainly, if institutions are exploring it they are not publicising their work in this area. So what is out there? This review describes web sites which may be of interest to anyone exploring the wider possibilities for web based staff development.

1. Technologies for Training

Technologies for Training (tft) is a national information and advisory service, developed on behalf of the Department for Education and Employment. Their web site contains some really useful pointers for technology based training in the form of briefings, reports and Frequently Asked Questions. The briefings are short and simple and cover a range of topics from *TBT Production: in-house v contracting* to *Combining Technology-Based Training with 'traditional' tutor-led training*. The reports which can be found in the Products section of the site are fewer in number than the briefings but are equally as useful, particularly if you are interested in computer assisted assessment.

2. National Staff Development Council (NSDC) 'E-Learning for Educators: Implementing the Standards for Staff Development'

This document has been written for an American audience and therefore reflects their own staff development ethos and framework. Despite this, the 'Considering E-Learning' and 'Guiding Questions' sections are a useful starting point for anyone developing their own web based staff development plan.

3. TALiSMAN (Teaching and Learning in Scottish Metropolitan Area Networks project) reports

The TALiSMAN project has now ended, leaving behind two particularly useful reports which can be found within the JTAP section of the JISC web site. The first report, *The Role of Virtual Learning Environments in the Online Delivery of Staff Development - Report 1: Review of Experiences of Delivering TALiSMAN Online Courses* written by Colin Milligan, describes two approaches to delivering online staff development along with the project findings and lessons learnt.

Virtual Learning Environments in the Online Delivery of Staff Development - Report 2: Delivering Staff and Professional Development Using Virtual Learning Environments, also written by Colin Milligan, examines some of the key factors for successful online delivery of staff and professional development. It also assesses a number Virtual Learning Environments (VLE's) which can be used to support the learning process, although it is probably fair to say that VLE's have undergone a considerable period of developed since the report was written in 1999.

URLs for Web Resources

1. http://www.tft.co.uk/briefings.html
2. http://www.nsdc.org/e-learning.pdf
3. http://www.jisc.ac.uk/jtap/reports.html
4. http://www.sesdl.scotcit.ac.uk:8082/
5. http://www.lgu.ac.uk/deliberations/
6. http://www.learndirect.co.uk/personal/freestuff/tasters/
7. http://www.elicit.scotcit.ac.uk/default.htm
8. http://www.demos.ac.uk/welcome.html
9. http://www.results.ac.uk/

4. Scottish Electronic Staff Development Library (SeSDL)

The SeSDL is a SHEFC funded collaborative project involving the Universities of Edinburgh, Paisley and Strathclyde. This web-based resource centre is designed to encourage the sharing and reuse of staff development materials. The library contains approximately 1000 'granules' which can be used individually or packaged to create a lesson. SeSDL can be searched or browsed under the 5 main headings of educational development, educational technology, academic management, resource type and subject area. A password is required to gain access to the library, this can be obtained immediately by filling in a registration form on the site.

5. DeLiberations

DeLiberations, which is based in the Educational Development unit at London Guildhall University, is a good web based resource for educational developers, librarians, academic staff and managers in education. It is a collection of teaching and learning related articles, case studies, links and much more arranged generically, by discipline, by other educational issues and by organisations.

6. Learndirect Tasters

These tasters are an example of how Learndirect have designed their web based materials. It is always useful to look at different approaches to development in order to gain a better understanding of what structures and formats might be most appropriate for your own content.

7. ELICIT - Enabling Large-scale Institutional implementation of C&IT

ELICIT is a collaborative project between Napier University, Queen Margaret University College, University of Glasgow, The Robert Gordon University and University of Strathclyde. The project is developing learning materials to facilitate large-scale staff development in Communication and Information Technology. The materials take the form of modules covering different aspects of C&IT from virtual learning environments to video conferencing. A password for access can be obtained on request.

8. DEMOS project - online materials for staff disability awareness

This collaborative project between Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Salford, University of Manchester and UMIST is developing an online learning package, which is aimed specifically at academic staff and will examine the issues faced by disabled students in higher education. Although the materials are not currently available, the project team intends allowing wider access after the user-testing phase is complete.

9. RESULTs network - Resource Exchange & Support for Users of Learning Technologies

RESULTs is a collaborative project between the University of Warwick and UMIST. It is setting up a web portal for the Learning Technologies community which will provide forums for discussion and feedback, and link to learning technology resources including the provision of a central repository for exchanging learning technology related materials for staff and educational development.

An online version of this article, including links to the resources mentioned, can be found on the SEDA website at:

www.seda.demon.co.uk/eddevs/vol3/sd.html

In the Field

First in an occasional series of interviews with SEDA institutional members

Canterbury Christchurch University College has been a SEDA institutional member for some years. In March I visited the college to talk to Tracy Bell-Reeves, Staff Development Officer, about the initiatives she has been involved in, the issues facing her and the ways in which SEDA supports the work of her unit.

Like many HE institutions Canterbury Christchurch has no Educational Development Unit but implements its learning and teaching strategy through a combination of people and specialised units: an Assistant Principal with responsibility for teaching and learning, the Staff Development Unit, the Centre for Research in HE (one person!) and the Technology in Teaching and Learning Unit. Additionally there are IT and Learning representatives in the faculties and a PL for Staff Development in the Faculty of Education. Tracy described this group as 'disparate' and talked of the problems of creating a coherent approach to teaching and learning across the institution and disseminating information across the various individuals and groups.

However, one success in this area has been the cross college conferences which occur three times each year and bring together staff from across the faculties to share ideas and good practice. Another has been to use the HEFCE funds for "Rewarding and Developing Staff" to set up a number of projects, some of which have strong links to learning and teaching such as the establishment of Faculty ICT Support officers, bids for CPD funding and tackling the issues of development for part-time staff below 0.4.

Raising the number of staff engaged with development across the College is a challenge for the College as with many HEIs. Tracy has had some success in introducing NVQs for non-teaching staff; however a key issue at the moment is to provide a broader professional development progression route for these staff and to address the CPD / accreditation needs of :

- specialist academic staff such as those involved in ICT
- visiting lecturers
- academic staff in partner FE colleges.

According to Tracy, SEDA has been useful in that it has provided a valuable network through which she has been able to meet other staff in her position, share ideas and gain access to innovative developments. SEDA publications, especially the SEDA Induction Pack, have been very helpful. This particular pack has been given to all new staff joining Tracy's academic induction programme. Tracy would like to see more individual lecturers becoming SEDA members and will take advantage of the Associate Member Scheme to add named staff with a teaching and learning responsibility to the institutional member details. They will then get their own SEDA mailing via the institutional contact and this may lead to greater cohesion across the team.

Tracy will also be exploring the range of SEDA professional development awards now available under the new Professional Development Framework.

Tracy was clear that SEDA's constituency lay with the range of staff associated with these awards - learning technologists, research supervisors, people in student support and academic administration - some quite new to the idea of educational development. She felt that SEDA could do more to publicise itself to these groups through perhaps some kind of flyer in SEDA publications and through events that targeted specific groups such as visiting lecturers or nurse educators. In this vein Tracy welcomed the forthcoming event for people delivering HE in FE.

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The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001: supporting staff in implementing institutional policies

18th November 2002
The Jury's Inn Birmingham

A series of pre-conference workshops have been organised to take place on Monday 18th November. The aim of the day is to complement the main SEDA conference theme of 'forging links' by focusing on one particular current aspect of collaborative work - the requirements of the 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act. New duties come into force from September 2002 and the legislation will require a response by institutions with a particular focus on teaching and learning. Disability issues will have to be included in core institutional activities and strategies and this is likely to involve development and support for a wide range of staff.

Further details of the event are available on the SEDA website at:

www.seda.demon.co.uk/bham02.html

A Review of the SEDA Fellowship Scheme

The SEDA Fellowship Scheme has been running successfully for 8 years now. A total of 38 Fellowships and 2 Associate Fellowships have been awarded and 63 people are currently registered on the scheme. The combined expertise evidenced by Fellowship holders is considerable, for example 154 specialist topics have been identified and a wealth of experience has been reflected on, enhanced and developed through the achievement of the objectives and demonstration of the SEDA values.

But the world of staff and educational development has evolved since the Fellowship Scheme was originally conceived. The role of developers is becoming increasingly prominent in institutions due to the pressure on resources, the development of teaching and learning strategies, and the implications of HE agendas such as widening participation, employability and fair access. Additionally, different types of staff and educational developers are emerging, for example learning technologists, LTSN staff and departmental learning and teaching 'champions' who pioneer innovations in their own modules or courses.

SEDA is a dynamic organisation and is able to be both responsive and pro-active to developers' needs in these changing times. It is timely, therefore, to reflect on the Fellowship Scheme, to learn lessons and to consider areas for improvement and enhancement in order to take account of and provide for the new world of staff and educational development. At its meeting on Wednesday 12th June, the Fellowships Committee will brainstorm the first stage of this review process. The outcomes of the discussions will be shared with Fellowship holders, registrants and other interested parties with a view to obtaining a shared vision of an enhanced, up-to-date Fellowship Scheme.

It is likely that the main form of the Scheme will remain essentially the same, thereby allowing existing registrants to adapt to the up-dated version should they wish to do so (though they may remain with the current Scheme if preferred). Once the new version is finalised, new and potential registrants will then be required to take it up.

For more information watch this space! All ideas, comments and suggestions are very welcome.

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"What do Learning Technologists do?"

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Abstract

Learning technologists – who represent one example of the 'new professionals' currently emerging in Higher Education – are a rapidly growing group whose practices are poorly understood, even within their own community. In this paper, the questions of who learning technologists are, what they do and, perhaps more importantly, how they do it will be considered. In order to answer these questions, the experiences of learning technologists have been gathered and analysed as part of a SEDA small grant for research.

The paper will include an overview of the research, but will focus on the process through which collaborations academics on sustained curriculum development activities are initiated and structured, and will provide an insight into the values and strategies that guide their activities.

Introduction

The 'new professionals' emerging in Higher Education are, as yet, a relatively poorly understood group. In this paper, one particular group of new professionals ('learning technologists') will be described. This discussion will draw upon a set of interviews with learning technologists, building upon current research into their role practice.

Background

The idea that there is a group of 'new professionals' working in Higher Education whose roles seem to be hybrid, marginal and yet central to institutional processes of change seems to first have emerged as part of the Dearing report (NCIHE, 1997). Building on this report, Gornall (1999) investigated these posts more thoroughly, and began to explore their role in the processes of change in Higher Education institutions. Her study identified a group which shared a number of common features. Amongst these was an apparent contradiction, in that these posts were both marginal (typically being fixed-term and insecure) yet powerful (in that they were directly linked to strategic priorities). The roles did not fit neatly into existing organisational structures, mostly being based in central units and having a range of job titles. Also, they "do not yet see themselves as a group, as a *new* group or as a *professional* grouping – nor is this attribution generally made about them".

Subsequent research has identified several features that characterise posts of this type. A national survey (Beetham, 2000) identified c. 4,500 centrally-located & 3,000 departmental specialists, plus c. 8,000 departmentally-based academics who are also working in this area. These included 11 distinct roles – although there was a noted similarity between 'Learning Technologist' and 'Educational Developer with IT skills'. Beetham's study identified ten central activities for Learning Technology staff. The most important was 'keeping abreast of current developments in learning technologies'; the remaining nine were educational, developmental, strategic, interpersonal and communicative, but not technical.

In spite of this description of Learning Technologists' careers, many of their specific practices remain undocumented. The outline provided by the literature above was informally developed in the context of a reflective study of practice (Oliver, 2000). This study described the educative activities that form part of the work of Learning Technologists. It is the informal element of professional development within this that most closely relates to Gornall's observation about un-assessed tutoring, above. This study described the tutoring as being essentially a two-way process. In order to teach the collaborator, the Learning Technologist must first understand their context – in other words, learn from and about them. Taking this as a starting point, the remainder of this paper will describe a study that set out to develop a better understanding of these practices.

Methodology

The study drew on two comparable investigations: Becher's study of academic disciplines (1989), and Land's study of the orientations of staff developers (2000). Both of these used semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences and beliefs of members of the group under study. Thus an interview schedule was drawn up that drew from both of these sources, together with additional questions relating to distinctive topics from the literature review described above. This schedule was refined and extended as further issues arose from the interviews. This paper describes the findings from the first six interviews.

Description of roles

The first set of questions concerned the nature of the role. One theme, shared by all participants, was that the role focused on collaborating with different groups of staff.

> *What work is it if it's not collaborative? [...] Yes, everything I do is collaborative.*

The participants were keen to stress the heavy time commitment this requires – time which, because its outputs are intangible, can be hard to account for or justify.

As anticipated by the studies described above, at the heart of the role was a specific type of collaboration, which involved working with departmentally-based academics on curriculum development projects. However, as suggested by Beetham's study, it seems to be the case that few Learning Technologists solely undertake this kind of work. Most have additional responsibilities, which were described as including academic activities (research and teaching), managing (usually projects or initiatives, but less frequently being responsible for other staff), technical support, acting as research assistants or project officers, or being librarians.

One important theme was the tension between the marginal nature of the posts and their importance in terms of institutional change. In this study, this manifested itself as a subtle form of influence, used to subvert initiatives instigated centrally. This subversion was seen as an essential part of the role, reflecting the particular expertise of the post holder.

> *I think it needs somebody who's very much into questioning things because otherwise you could decide on a particular system and then just decide that you were going to roll it out to people as and when they asked for it. I think you need to – I hadn't thought a lot about this until recently because I haven't – I've been in a position where you could have given me things to do, whereas now I'm starting to think that you need to question more and more what it is they're trying to do and what you need to do it.*

This issue also alludes to the topic of professionalism; the participants felt that the role ought to be a professional one, and was in the process of becoming so, and sought to distance themselves from being seen as being in a simple service position.

In spite of this relative autonomy, the participants described themselves as having little or no formal authority. In the central area of collaborative curriculum development work, for example, they believed that they had no hold

This article is based on a presentation given at the 6th Annual SEDA Conference in Manchester, Nov 2001.

The project was funded as part of the 2000 round of SEDA small grants, under the title 'Towards the Scholarship of Educational Development'.

over the collaborating academics but were responsible for the success of the initiative. Here, again, they relied on goodwill and subtle persuasion to carry out the work and also to present it as a success.

Thus this role is shaped by a distinctive combination of autonomy, a lack of authority and responsibility for initiatives. In order to work within these constraints, the Learning Technologist must invest considerable time in building goodwill and strong collaborations across the institution, and relies on their specialist expertise and rhetorical skills to influence developments and decision making.

Description of activities

In order to describe the role of Learning Technologists, elements of their practice have already been alluded to. One of the defining features was the breadth of 'combined' roles added to the core work of collaborative curriculum development. Typically, this results in a fast-paced, widely varying job.

> *The good bits – the bits I like – it's the variety of things. Although that's probably a bad bit as well because there's too much variety. You don't feel you ever – you feel you're spread too thing. But I do like that bit. And working with lots of different people across the university. That's a good bit.*

Importantly, the participants felt that their activities were value-led, not technology-led.

> *From my role, [...] I think it's the pedagogic focus that is the important bit. And it's... the technology is just a tool to get you to do what you want to do, it's not 'it', if you see what I mean, it's just how you're doing it. It's like using a data projector or a bit of chalk, if you see what I mean. I don't think I've said that very well, actually.*

Although the values motivating the participants were shared, the work undertaken varied widely, even within the common element of curriculum development work. Whilst much of this was technology related, the specific topics addressed ranged from assessment to problem-based learning to document delivery, for example, and also took in other centrally-driven initiatives such as key skills and personal profiling.

The other major source of variation arose from the contexts within which the work was undertaken. There was a strong emphasis on the importance of learning about the intended context for the development, and tailoring the support provided, the examples used and the technology adopted to suit this. A vital element of this context, perhaps unsurprisingly (given Becher, 1989), was the nature of the department involved.

These projects typically arise in one of two ways: either in response to a request from an academic, or as a result of management policy. In both cases, Learning Technologists exercise their professional judgement to ensure that the work is 'appropriate' and viable. In the case of a request, this influence tends to occur as part of the negotiation of the project plan. In the case of policy-led initiatives, it occurs through dialogue with academics in the department in which the initiative is to be implemented.

However, not all projects are successful. One deciding feature seems to be the readiness of the departments involved – the participating academics must already see the need and value of the development, or else they will not engage with it effectively.

Collaboration as pedagogy

One of the least-well documented, but perhaps most important, elements of the role described in the literature review is the '*ad-hoc*, unassessed' tutoring described by Gornall (1999). This forms an integral part of the collaborative development work described above. Whilst the interviews to date have not fully illuminated this aspect of the role, they have provided a preliminary outline of it.

As has been noted, the topic for collaboration is usually technology-related. In such cases, it appears that a common pattern is followed for most successful collaborations. Although further work is required to confirm and develop this, the pattern appears to resemble a fairly stable curriculum in which education takes place through the process of collaborating.

The initial approach focuses on the use of a particular type of technology – something that Learning Technologists see as being relatively unimportant. The first phase of education takes place during the negotiation of the project. During this time, the main burden of learning falls to the Learning Technologist, who must come to understand the departmental context in which the project is to be implemented. At the same time, the academic involved may realise, through this dialogue, that certain of their taken-for-granted practices and values may be culturally determined rather than being general truths.

The next phase of collaboration works along the lines of 'proof of principle' - establishing how a certain approach or tool works in this particular context. During this phase, problems of implementation will be discussed, with the Learning Technologist learning about this specific context (and thus building up their case lore, and with it their own expertise) whilst teaching through dialogue (as described earlier) and the use of cases (often anecdotal) that illustrate principles or problems.

These discussions can lead the academic to question further their assumptions or the problems that arose during the project. This then moves the dialogue into the third phase of the curriculum, wherein general issues (such as theories or counter-examples, rather than additional supporting cases) from educational research are introduced.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that not all collaborations are successful. In part, the success is determined by the way in which the Learning Technologist is viewed. If they cannot establish their credentials with the academics, then it is unlikely that fruitful dialogue will follow, since the collaborator will see them as a service provider rather than an expert.

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Independent Work Experience: an evolving picture

P Watton, J Collings and J Moon Eds

This paper is intended as a resource for staff and educational developers seeking to introduce schemes for recognising and accrediting independent work experience. It should also be of value to lecturers wishing to introduce a work experience dimension into their own programmes and may prove particularly helpful for colleagues establishing foundation degrees. It provides a guide to developments in which independent work experience has been part of a structured learning experience within HE and an overview of nine DfEE work experience projects. Drawing particularly on the experience of the JEWELS project, involving a traditional and a new university, it includes practical examples and case studies which explore key issues, the extent and impact of independent work experience, development of a curriculum framework for learning from experience, recognition and accreditation and the strategic relevance of independent work experience within the University.

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Conclusions

The emergence of the 'new professionals' raises many issues for those working in Higher Education. Not least is the importance of learning about how and why these varied groups work, in order to understand how their practices are suited to institutions in the sector. In this paper, the practices of one group of new professionals – Learning Technologists – have been described, and a rationale offered for the validity of this approach.

Their practice can be characterised as: centring on collaborative curriculum development, usually initiated by an academic and focused on a particular piece of technology; typically including additional technical, research or management functions; being educative, using discussion, case studies and problems within the context of collaborations as the basis for reflection, and seeking to move the academic from the particular issues of implementation to more general educational issues; and being responsible but without authority, relying on goodwill, expertise and rhetoric to create opportunities (both practical and educational) and influence policy.

Such a role represents a coherent and viable approach to engaging with change within institutions, both in the form of implemented policy and through the development of staff. What remains to be seen is how this complements existing approaches to support and development as practiced by established groups such as educational developers.

Acknowledgements

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Biography

Martin Oliver lectures in teaching and learning with C&IT at UCL, and is deputy editor of the Journal of the Association for Learning Technology (*ALT-J*).

Constructive Alignment in Action: An Imaginative Curriculum Symposium

November 4th 2002, Centre Point Conference Centre London

The sensible idea of aligning learning intentions with the curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment processes and resources to support learning has been developed by Professor John Biggs. The idea is implicit in the QAA programme specifications and subject benchmarking which encourage curriculum designers to make these sorts of connections. It is also embedded in the idea of institutional learning and teaching or quality enhancement (Scotland) strategies. The idea of constructive alignment within the educational process cannot be separated from the managerial, resourcing and cultural environments and decision making processes of each HE institution.

The conference will provide an opportunity to consider the connections, synergies and tensions between educational and organisational theory, policy and practice and to review research evidence for the impacts of the idea on HE teachers and student learning. It will also provide an opportunity for institutional managers, change agents and policy makers to reflect on the realities of alignment in a world of complexity.

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"Not up to Your Usual Standard": under-achievement and intervention in undergraduate examinations

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University of Kent at Canterbury

Abstract

This paper presents the research findings from a project which has been exploring the reasons for dramatic under-performance of undergraduate students in their examinations, compared to their coursework. Based on research with a small sample of social science students, we examine a range of explanations for significant disparities between exam and coursework performance, and conclude that the issue is both complex and multi-causal. However, there are a number of ways in which academic intervention of different kinds can help to minimise the problem and we focus upon a number of these strategies for consideration. The paper concludes by suggesting that exam under-performance is a complex phenomenon, but one which is often highly amenable to resolution.

The authors would like to thank SEDA for financial support for this research. The SEDA Conference session was lively from the outset and we are grateful for the input of colleagues. Arising from discussion at the conference we have modified the paper to reflect questions and issues raised. We welcome correspondence about this research.

Introduction

Whatever their respective strengths and weaknesses, both written coursework and unseen examinations continue to provide an important indicator of academic ability in the social sciences. Their use as a means of formal assessment has long been a focus of discussion and debate. Of course, each approach makes particular demands upon students and requires the application of somewhat different skills. Nonetheless, as indicators of ability, one can usually expect and hope for some broad correlation between exam and coursework performance. However, what if there are marked differences between student performances in their coursework and in their examinations? How can we account for this difference? What does it reflect?

This article is based on a presentation given at the 6th Annual SEDA Conference in Manchester, Nov 2001.

The project was funded as part of the 2000 round of SEDA small grants, under the title 'Towards the Scholarship of Educational Development'.

It is this disparity that is the focus of this paper and the research upon which it rests. In particular, we draw upon a small number of social science students who have exhibited a disparity of at least two classes between their coursework and exam performance, and seek to explore the reasons for this.

In the process of defining 'under-performance', we included students who had not failed in either form of assessment, but whose work met our criteria (70% in coursework compared to 50% in exams, for example). Our definition of under-performance is relative and is not restricted to 'failing' students. Under-performance might relate to students with difficulties in one module or several, and might be manifested in either relatively poor coursework or relatively poor exam results. Our findings in respect of these points are discussed below.

Methodology

This research examined the first year coursework and exam results of all students registered for a social policy degree in 1999/2000, a total of 48 students. In addition to scrutiny of results, we interviewed some of these students.

At the University of Kent, the first year of full-time study (Part I) generally comprises eight units of study: a combination of one-unit modules of 12 weeks in length, or two-unit modules of 24 weeks. Consequently, although registered for a social policy degree, the 48 students undertook a broad-based first year, which saw them studying a wide range of social science subjects.

From the initial 48 students, we excluded from our project those students who had submitted applications for concessionary treatment in relation to their academic performance at any time during Part I. From the remaining students we then identified 17 students who, in one or more of their first degree modules, had a difference between coursework and exam marks amounting to at least two degree classifications: a total of 30 incidences of under-performance. Of the 17 students, nine experienced this difference in relation to one module only, and eight in relation to two or more modules. Every case of under-performance related to exam performance; coursework marks were considerably higher than unseen examination results. Six students failed no exams at all, three failed one only and eight failed two or more. Three of the students were awarded a Merit (60% or above) for their overall performance. There was a concentration of under-performance in three modules, which accounted for half of the 30 instances of under-performance.

There were differences in the background characteristics of these students, which other studies have cited as important in understanding different levels of performance (see Eikeland and Manger 1992). However, we found no discernible patterns in relation to the experiences of the mature students, nor those with non-traditional qualifications.

Reasons for under-performance

One possible explanation for under-performance lies in the overall ability of students. Higher education has moved towards the teaching of a broader range of student aptitudes and abilities than was once the case and this has implications for overall levels of achievement. However, though this may account for weak overall performance, it is less viable as an explanation for marked disparity between coursework and exam performance, where we are concerned with understanding why some students have produced good quality written work, yet considerably poorer exam scripts. Looking at the overall first year performance of these students, the majority did not appear to be especially weak. Moreover, given the retrospective nature of this study, we were also able to examine the overall second year performance of the 17 sampled students, which similarly did not appear to indicate weak ability. Regardless of latent ability, there may be a link between attitudes to study and achievement. However, it was interesting that many of these students exhibited high levels of seminar attendance, appearing to indicate high levels of motivation. The time-lag between early modules (ending in February) and exams (in June) might have been another explanatory factor, but there was no indication of this when results were scrutinised.

Another possible explanation - and one immediately raised by a number of academic staff when this disparity was discussed - was the question of cheating. In other words, the quality of coursework submitted was not a fair reflection of ability because of possible copying from other students and general plagiarism, in contrast to unseen examinations where opportunities for cheating are far less likely. Of course, if cheating with coursework is a factor, the corresponding exam results should not be described as under-performance. Awareness of this as a possible causal issue pervaded the entire study; however, we speculate that plagia-

rism as a causal explanation is generally unlikely. On the one hand, it appears to fit uneasily with the overall ability of these students and what appears to be a positive attitude towards study. It also appears to be incompatible with the fact that the majority of these students experienced this disparity in the context of just one module. There were certainly no formal or informal reports or suggestions of cheating in any of these cases.

The issue of poor exam techniques is another feasible explanation for these disparities. There has long been a concern in higher education that undergraduate students are often not adequately experienced in the skills necessary to produce good quality exam answers. This is certainly not a new concern and many higher education institutions, including the University of Kent, have programmes of support, assistance and guidance in examination and revision techniques, both in terms of general advice and more subject-specific input. The relative effectiveness of these programmes and approaches was not a direct concern of this research and has been explored elsewhere (Rust and Price 1994). Students from overseas, and those classified as mature students, were not disproportionately represented amongst the students who were under-performing, though it remains the case that those mature or overseas students who were under-performing may have suffered from lack of exam experience.

It was interesting, however, that poor exam techniques do not appear to account for some of the disparities we uncovered. Although such difficulties may explain the consistently weak exam performance of some students, it does not adequately explain why the majority of our sampled students experienced under-performance in just one module. The question is not simply about understanding poor exam performance, but is also about understanding why students appear to do particularly badly in some modules. With this in mind, six of our sampled students were interviewed to explain the reasons for under-performance appearing to be over-represented amongst a small number of modules.

All of the students interviewed reported that they found the selected modules especially difficult. They raised two linked issues - concern with the labeling of courses and concern at the intensity of course content and expectations. Students suggested that a few courses were inappropriately described, particularly those labelled as 'Introductory'. These courses were felt to be particularly intensive, covering far more than students had anticipated. It appeared that these courses may have been recruiting two distinct groups - students aiming to specialise in that particular subject, and students aiming to specialise in another subject but taking the module as part of a broad-based social science first year programme. Evidently, each body of students had somewhat different demands and expectations but once on the same course, all were expected to cover the same amount of ground. Some students admitted to investing large amounts of time in these courses, in an attempt to keep up and complete their coursework to a satisfactory standard, something which was clearly not so easy in the context of exams. This point also helps to explain why those students exhibiting notable disparity between exams and coursework in some of their courses, particularly in the case of just one module, were otherwise strong students. We surmise that these students were struggling with a difficult and intensive course and were in turn investing a disproportionate amount of time and effort to ensure that they produced good quality coursework. In the context of exams, however, it was evidently much more difficult for these students to attain the same level of achievement in a subject that they may have been struggling with.

A related issue was consistency in marking standards, particularly between different examiners (Foggin and Rhynners 1995). Although we found no evidence of inconsistency, there have been a number of moves to establish consistent marking, not least the use of double-marking of scripts, and a widespread sensitivity to this concern. Of more interest in this context was the expectations of examiners on particular modules. Academic expectations of student achievement is an issue that we have already touched upon. It may be especially pertinent when a module may be simultaneously catering for two or more distinct groups of students and may imply a need for academics and module convenors to pay closer attention to both the nature of their student intake and what it is appropriate to expect from these students. This leads us then to what can be done in terms of intervention to minimise disparities between coursework and exam performance.

Academic intervention?

A number of themes arise from this research in terms of possible strategies for academic intervention. First is the importance of systematically following and picking-up problems with exam performance. There are also questions about how courses are described, and how such descriptions are interpreted by students. Linked to this, there needs to be careful consideration by academics of what they should appropriately expect from their students, especially when they may be simultaneously using the same module to teach somewhat disparate groups of students. In terms of loss of confidence, the potential impact on students of single or multiple poor exam performance should not be underestimated; there are implications here for student retention.

An additional point, and one which underpins this entire research, is the importance of offering both general and subject-specific coverage of revision and examination techniques (Leitch 1993). The specific demands that unseen examinations make on students is now widely recognised and acknowledged within higher education. The University of Kent and others have established a range of programmes for guiding students in terms of revision and exam techniques. However, there may still be a need for some academics to take this issue more seriously. In conclusion, it is evident that disparities between coursework and exam performance are considerably more complex than they may at first appear. This is an issue that can particularly affect the more able and motivated student and has the possibility of tempering their enthusiasm for academic learning and study. For this reason alone, it is certainly too important an issue for higher education to ignore.

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Biographies

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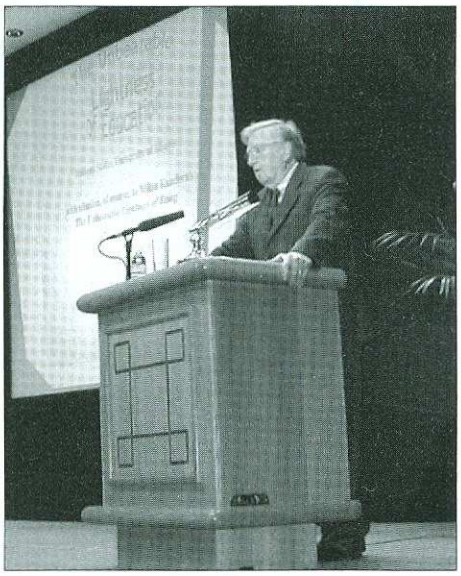
Jan Sellers has worked at the University of Kent since 1993, where she is Coordinator of the Student Learning Advisory Service. Her doctoral research (2000) explored the career development of part-time hourly paid teaching staff in Adult and Continuing Education.

The SEDA / AISHE Dublin Conference – some personal views

(from conversations with John Peters from Worcester, Aiofe Moran, Nora Brophy and Barry McMullin from Dublin, Rakesh Bhanot and Frances Deepwell from Coventry and Andrew Comrie from Southampton)

SEDA's spring conference was held in Dublin Castle. The newly-formed All Ireland Society for Higher Education (AISHE) invited SEDA to host a joint event, and with 209 delegates, 45 sessions, a keynote from Robert Stake and a closing address from the Minister of Education and Science, the expectations were high.

Let's first deal with what conference organisers call the housekeeping. "The best food at any conference I have ever been to" was one summary. The Castle is now an international conference centre, with excellent spaces for mingling, chatting, networking and eating scones, jam and cream. The timings worked, the atmosphere was relaxed, most bookstalls were busy, chamber music wafted up to greet us, a clever warm-up quiz got some Anglo-Irish co-operation under way and no one seemed to be on their own for long.



Bob Stake speaking at the SEDA / AISHE conference in April

Everyone's experience is so particular it is hard to characterise the impact of the sessions. "I got at least one idea from each session which I could bring back and use in my place" contrasts with "The sessions were good quality, but I found material on supporting change hard to find". "There was lots on different routes to professional development" and "There was plenty on new teaching methods" contrasts with "There was plenty on evaluation, but it was aimed mainly for people doing large-scale work rather than for the individual teacher". So I will select two themes from the conversations.

The first is the pervasive thread of problem-based learning. "I am devising a PBL approach for clinical education, and it was great to get the academic background" and the chance to think through and discuss the cultural changes. "Students from the School of Dentistry at TCD acted out a problem in front of us", "The sessions on PBL with the students were the most enjoyable" and "The session applying problem-based learning to 17th century lyric poetry was wonderful" together with the warning "There was a lot on PBL, but more as a new teaching method than as a major change in higher education". "What I took from Bob Stake's keynote was how we must beware stamping out the really valuable things in learning, and how good PBL can encourage people to go their own way."

The second is the delight we found in the value of the story in evaluation. The session on this theme by Jane Field was picked out for its emphasis on the value of real voices, true reflection, the use of the critical friend, the development of deeper understanding and independence amongst the participants. Bob Stake's session, which started with the challenge of evaluating some really excellent chocolates, was a fugue of questions, comments and doubts around a narrative, a story, a description. (Yes, but how do I *know* they were excellent chocolates?) "When you are invited to tell the story, you describe how you see it – the whole environment and context comes into the picture. Our process is about listening to the student voice".

Bob Stake's keynote divided its audience. To know Kundera's book, or to know Stake's work, seemed to make the space which allowed the presentation to begin its work. Was he really saying that we just could not evaluate education? That learning in HE is like the human spirit under communism, surviving beneath weight? Or was he filling his talk with wicked asides, unsignalled but explosive? (Did he really name the academic's fear of not covering the curriculum as anupholsteryaphobia?) "He gave the impression of going of on unassociated routes, but he was really discussing what we are all about. What we assess is not the knowledge – just its visible form."

Michael Woods, the then Minister for Education and Science, wound the conference to a close with an intriguing presentation. His research career with composts have allowed the deserts of unproductive marsh and bog lands to bloom but his speech then changed gear to a full defence of his custodianship of higher education (the calling of the election was known to be only days away). He ended by wishing us well in our mission. "He was good and down-to-earth." It is significant that AISHE has already established a presence with the ministry – might SEDA brief Estelle Morris on the nature of educational development?

Delegates discuss a poster display

There were some highlights – the group from Abertay discussing educational development across Scotland, the group from Belfast putting medics into primary schools to develop their communication skills, the group from Leicester with an action maze as a development experience, the discussion in Bob Thakwray's session doubting the value of what can be counted, Phil Race's session ("I'm a fan, because I have read his books"), Kerry Phillips' invisible administration, the poster session for dealing with questions, the number of applicants who just wanted visas ...

Of course we have to celebrate the social life which went around the conference – the dinner, the music, the dancing and the wonderful hospitality which marked this out as a most special event. Terry Barrett's contribution was magnificent. It was an environment in which SEDA's strengths could flourish. A group of teaching fellows, new to educational development, found it "Accessible, approachable, enjoyable and friendly. In spirit, nothing like subject conferences. And they realised that they too could give papers on their work, to a community that is genuinely interested."

The conference will become a benchmark for what these events can be. It was a significant milestone for AISHE, and confirmed its existence in the Irish academic community. It gave the members of SEDA an opportunity to make links with an important new circle of colleagues. A complete success? Only if we forget Rakesh's attempts to award prizes of Irish folk music CDs ...

James Wisdom