

Educational Developments

Incorporating the SEDA Newsletter and *The New Academic* magazine



STAFF AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

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Learning and Teaching Strategies: the implications for educational development

Professor Graham Gibbs

Director of Research, Centre for Higher Education Practice,
The Open University

Introduction

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) Institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy initiative will provide institutions in England with funding totalling about 50m, over three years, to support the implementation of a more strategic approach to the improvement of teaching and its effectiveness. Institutions will be required, from 2001, to report on the achievement of explicit learning and teaching targets, as part of annual operating plans. This will move educational development to the centre of institutional planning, management and evaluation, and will have a dramatic impact on the role and functioning of educational development staff and their centres. Some institutions in other parts of the UK, and all institutions in Australia, are also developing Learning and Teaching Strategies, but without external funding. This article outlines what impact the development of institutional Learning and Teaching Strategies might have on educational development, and the challenges and opportunities this may entail over the next five years.

The HEFCE Learning and Teaching Strategies initiative

Before the 1990s most educational

development in the UK focused on individual teachers and individual modules. Activity was largely responsive, or driven by the interests and personal style of educational developers, rather than strategic, partly because most institutions had no strategic goals for their teaching. The overall quality of educational provision was often seen as the sum total of the quality of individual teachers. Educational development was largely peripheral to institutional planning and management, even where it was active and valued.

By the early 1990s it had become clear that the pressures brought about by the massification of higher education, and by its reorientation towards the employability of students, were beyond the ability of individual teachers to respond to. It was also clear that little progress was going to be made in shifting to more resource based, independent or flexible learning, with or without the exploitation of IT, unless institutions paid attention to their infrastructure, funding and accountancy systems, rewards systems, use of learning space, and so on. The MacFarland Report (CSUP, 1992) recommended that institutions should develop comprehensive learning and teaching strategies to deal with such issues.

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The magazine of SEDA
incorporating the SEDA Newsletter and
The New Academic magazine

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Editorial

Welcome to this first edition of the new SEDA magazine, *Educational Developments*. Our hopes for the magazine are that it will grow over time into a thought provoking and informative source for those engaged in the process of change in higher education.

Educational development has established itself both as a distinctive professional area within higher education and as an approach to improving the quality of the student learning experience through the actions of individuals, departments and institutions. However, these actions do not occur within a vacuum and increasingly the national and international policy context impinges on the previously largely autonomous activities of many of us.

This first edition reflects the diversity of our constituency and the pressures or challenges facing them - in the classroom, at an institutional or policy level, and in our growing international presence. We lead with Graham Gibbs' keynote from the last SEDA educational developers' conference in which, having outlined the English Funding Council's support for institutional learning and teaching strategies, he provides a particularly challenging view of the possible nature of educational development five years' hence. Graham's vision is of a mainstream, more devolved, more accountable and strategic approach to supporting institutional aims and policies. Any such shift from working with individuals to supporting organisational development would be very uncomfortable for some but it would certainly put us at the centre of the action in the current educational climate.

Patricia Weeks also provides some challenges for us as an organisation in terms of supporting and assessing development work, including the Fellowships scheme, at a distance; involving non-UK members more in committees and the Executive; and participation in other activities such as conferences, networks or joint research activities. The technology is there; we just need to see how to use it more to achieve Patricia's view of the 'global SEDA community'.

Increasingly the work of educational developers is involved with establishing and managing projects under funded initiatives. Carole and David Baume provide a useful guide to some of the current initiatives. We will return to other areas in future editions.

Brian Smith and Jennifer Rowley give us some personal viewpoints and ideas on teaching and learning, and the supervision of undergraduate dissertations. A challenge for those interested in educational developments is to consider the implications of these articles for other delivery modes and different contexts within higher education. In addition to the usual book reviews, we are also looking to review other learning resources and Stephen Bostock provides a first input with his review of Virtual Learning Environments.

This magazine is the result of a merger of the SEDA Newsletter and *The New Academic*, though with a particular emphasis on the work of 'educational developers'. As such, we make no apologies for the more 'newsy' content as it does reflect what is going on in our community at the moment.

We hope you find enough to interest you in this first edition. Please let us know if we are addressing the interests, concerns and needs of 'educational developers' in the widest sense. What might we be missing? We do want to represent our membership and the increasing numbers who make use of our services and take part in our activities. To do this we need your contributions.

Ronald Macdonald FSEDA, Co-Chair, SEDA
James Wisdom, Co-ordinator, Publications



Learning and Teaching Strategies: the implications for educational development

Graham Gibbs

Director of Research, Centre for Higher Education Practice The Open University

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The Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) focused attention on the goals and success of entire degree programmes and on the infrastructure that supported, or failed to support, the quality of teaching. A small number of institutions, often those facing the largest scale challenges, started developing institutional strategies. The Dearing Report (NCIHE, 1997) was emphatic about the immediate need for Learning and Teaching Strategies in all institutions. A commissioned report to the HEFCE on improving teaching argued that both institutional learning and teaching strategies and discipline-specific networks concerned with teaching, were necessary if either project-based initiatives (such as the Teaching and Learning Technology Programme) or institutional initiatives (such as Enterprise in Higher Education) were ever to lead to wide scale embedded change (Gibbs, 1997). By 1998 the HEFCE wanted to develop an initiative around the implementation of strategies but was not confident that there was enough good practice in the sector to build on. A research study was commissioned to find out if higher education was ready for such an initiative (Gibbs, 1999). It showed that at the start of 1999 nearly 50% of institutions had a strategy and submitted documentation. However while a small number of institutions had well developed strategies that they had worked with for some years, most documentation omitted much of what a strategy would eventually need to contain. For example there were many policies in place but few mechanisms to implement policies, monitor the extent of their implementation or evaluate their impact. Few strategies had a coherent rationale, were linked to institutional missions, or were an integral part of institutional planning and management. While educational development activities, such as programmes for new lecturers, were often mentioned, educational development was rarely described as having a strategic role. Most of the other 50% of institutions reported that they were in the process of developing such a strategy. Only three institutions reported that they had no intention of developing a strategy, and all three have since changed their minds. The sector was ready, but in need of support.

In May 1999 the HEFCE announced the £90m 'Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund', much the largest component of which was financial and practical support for institutions to develop and implement institutional learning and teaching strategies (HEFCE, 1999). The funding is an entitlement (ie. not competitive): all institutions that submit a strategy in January 2000, and an accompanying plan specify-

ing what additional activities they will undertake with their funding, and accompanying measurable targets, will receive their funding allocation, based on student numbers. Institutions that would like to spend longer developing a strategy may submit outline plans for an 'emerging strategy' but are still entitled to full funding. The funding is for three years in the first instance. What happens after that will depend on how successful the initiative is in moving institutions forwards. Details of the initiative and all HEFCE publications can be found on the HEFCE www site <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/>.

The HEFCE commissioned the Centre for Higher Education Practice at the Open University to produce a guide to good practice, based on institutions' existing documentation and on case studies from visits, explaining what a Learning and Teaching Strategy might look like and how it might develop over time (HEFCE, 1999b). This has been sent to all institutions and, subsequently, reprinted twice to meet demand from institutions to support internal seminars and meetings. Five regional seminars for Pro Vice Chancellors (PVCs) and heads of educational development units have been mounted (attended by 265 staff from 141 institutions) to explain the initiative and to discuss the most appropriate form of Learning and Teaching Strategies in different kinds of institutions. A www site has been mounted to share documentation and practices associated with Learning and Teaching Strategies.

As educational developers are asked to work with their PVCs (Teaching and Learning) to develop and implement an institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy they may face a number of challenges.

Providing a coherent educational rationale for the strategy

The best Learning and Teaching Strategies start with a clear educational rationale. In the USA this may be based on the 'Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education' and in Australia it might be based on the student learning research which underpins the use of the Course Experience Questionnaire which is used for quality assurance (QA) in all Australian institutions. At present most Learning and Teaching Strategies from English institutions lack such any such rationale, and PVCs are not often in a good position to write one. It is already falling on educational development staff to invent such a rationale - and it is not easy!

Analysing the context and providing convincing rationales for action

Learning and Teaching Strategies need to undertake an 'environmental scan' and analyse the challenges and changes the institution faces which will have implications for teaching and learning. If this analysis is not well argued it can be difficult to convince staff to take the strategy seriously. Judging from the often unconvincing pre-ambls in documentation, the weak diagnosis of problems, and sometimes the complete lack of a case for needing any kind of strategy, senior management may need help with this analysis.

Providing evidence of a conceptual argument behind choice of tactics

The MacFarland Report's (ibid) analysis of what is changing in higher education seemed impressive at the time and still stands up today, but the case which it then went on to make for the use of IT to achieve improved cost-effectiveness, and to solve all other known problems, appears even more deeply flawed today than it did then. Even where there is an impressive analysis of the context there may be a weak case for proposed teaching tactics to address the problems. Educational developers have a role in helping to select the most appropriate tactics to achieve particular strategic ends.

Concentrating on strategy rather than on tactics

Educational developers are used to dealing in tactics, especially at the level of classroom practice. They are less used to thinking strategically and matching institution-wide initiatives to the achievement of institutional goals. They may be used to helping teachers to implement policy but they may be less used to developing policy and devising mechanisms for implementing it. They may have superb interpersonal skills and training skills but little organisational development expertise.

Being proactive

Leading new initiatives may seem like a great idea, even if we don't have much experience of doing it, but this may well involve stopping doing some of what we are used to doing - such as being responsive to requests. Being strategic may involve saying no to requests for assistance

with some kinds of innovations or use of tactics, or saying no to a lecturer from a department which has prioritised changes other than the ones the lecturer is interested in. It may involve rationing help and effort in line with institutional priorities rather than following one's nose or the noses of our most frequent and valued clients.

Operationalising goals and setting targets

Educational development has seldom had to evaluate its impact in quantitative ways or to think about operationalising its goals or setting measurable targets. It has been content to account for *inputs* (how many workshops run on putting a teaching portfolio together) rather than *outputs* (how many people submitted teaching portfolios as part of cases for promotion) let alone *outcomes* (has the culture changed so that teaching is valued to a greater extent?). We have a lot to learn about how to specify the outcomes of our efforts in useful and convincing ways, and how to measure the achievement of these outcomes.

Becoming involved in monitoring and evaluation of the strategy

Educational developers are used to helping teachers to evaluate their teaching or their courses. They may even have got involved in evaluating departments or curricula, especially if they have been directly involved in TQA. But few have been involved in institutional evaluation. American institutions often have an 'office of institutional research' or some such function which is capable of answering the questions prompted by recently published performance indicators (PIs) for England, such as: "Why is student retention worse here than elsewhere?". However in America these offices are usually separate from faculty development centres who do not have the capacity to address such questions. When I was at Oxford Brookes University every time there was a question like this someone had to find a small pot of money and put it out to tender as a research project (and the Psychologists usually ended up doing it rather well).

In future, educational development will need to be able to perform this function for the institution, and its traditional grass roots evaluation function may need to be left to teachers to do for themselves. Educational development will also need to monitor the implementation of policy. For example most institutions appear to have a policy that part time teachers should have a mentor, but few implement this policy and even fewer know if it has been implemented, let alone know if this has had any positive impact on teaching or student learning. Part of being strategic involves following through on policy and monitoring implementation and impact.

Re-organisation and rationalisation of support functions

It is not unusual for institutions to re-organise portfolios of responsibilities so as to have a single person in the senior management team responsible for all aspects of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. In some cases this has led to the creation of a new senior management position. New PVCs with new portfolios nearly always re-organise what they are responsible for. In any case Learning and Teaching Strategies are about joined up thinking and this includes coherence of support functions. Educational development units' position in relation to the library, student services, personnel, IT services and so on will be scrutinised (again). One centre established twenty years ago has already been 'rationalised'. Some institutions are making substantial strategic investments in the supporting infrastructure, such as in 'learning resource centres', and this can make additional changes in teaching possible and changes demands made on educational development.

Some of the issues raised above may seem more like threats than opportunities, but the balance overall is undoubtedly positive. The following issues offer tremendous scope for educational development to have a real impact.

Increased funding

There will be substantial sums of money available, up to £2m per institution, and most of this will be spent on educational development activity, if not all on educational development centres. Institutions are also committing matched funding, in some cases. While this is funding for only three years in the first instance the initiative may be extended and there are likely to be other knock-on effects. When the Enterprise in Higher Education programme stopped many institutions retained staff, functions and even whole units that had previously been supported by external funding, and the same may happen again. We are likely to see a step change in institutional investment in educational development.

Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT)

The HEFCE has encouraged institutions to consider ways to support membership of the ILT. Support for the development of teachers' portfolios, for programmes for new teachers and even for accreditation and membership fees, are all likely in many institutions.

Recognition and reward

A central purpose of the HEFCE's 'Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund', of which the Learning and Teaching Strategy initiative is a component, is to redress the

balance of attention between research and teaching. And central to this is recognition and reward for excellent teachers. While the HEFCE will mount its own national reward scheme it recognises that institutions have to learn how to do this for themselves if values are to change. There are many new and interesting schemes being put in place which go beyond including teaching amongst promotion criteria, for example:

- Teaching Fellowships for spreading an innovation to other departments (Sunderland University);
- reward for innovations related to the institution's Learning and Teaching Strategy, and a role in implementing the strategy (Napier University)
- Readership posts for scholarship of teaching or for leadership of change in teaching (University of East London);
- salary increments or one-off special financial awards for particular teaching achievements in the previous year, assessed through annual appraisal (Open University).

There is plenty of scope for developing new recognition and reward mechanisms and now there is also funding to implement such mechanisms.

Staffing

Institutions are planning to place new staff in educational development centres or to second departmental staff to centres. They are establishing new posts (such as Readerships and Research Fellowships to support pedagogic research) and setting up new organisational structures for those with teaching responsibilities (such as subject-based Teaching Co-ordinators who lead Faculty Teaching Development Groups). Using the funding to provide additional educational development expertise is very common. A key role for established educational development staff may be to train, mentor and support a larger, more distributed team than in the past.

Infrastructure changes

Institutions are being encouraged to re-think many features of their infrastructure and systems, for example:

- what a teacher's duty consists of, other than class contact hours;
- how time to develop new courses or new course materials can be built into teachers' duty allocations or into longer term departmental business planning;
- how teaching and learning space can be reconfigured;
- what categories of full-time (FT) and part-time (PT) staff the institution needs to support different teaching functions, leading to the creation of new types of posts with new terms and

conditions, and new demands for training and monitoring;

- policies on appointment, probation and appraisal which give more prominence to teaching;
- refurbishment of quality assurance systems, and accompanying specifications of course documentation, so as to implement the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

Educational development after five years of Learning and Teaching Strategies

If institutions take Learning and Teaching Strategies seriously, then within about five years educational development will probably look very different than it does today. It may be:

- mainstream, and necessary to help the institution to meet HEFCE conditions of funding. As a consequence it will be more integrated into university structures, funding and policy and the Head of Educational Development will find her or himself as a member of the senior management team, or very close to it;
- more devolved and Faculty or Department-based, to implement Learning and Teaching Strategies which will have become largely devolved. In Australia this has threatened the existence of central units that could not adapt fast enough and could not be helpful enough to departments;
- more accountable, with explicit targets and quantitative monitoring and evaluation reported to the HEFCE in order to retain funding. It will be harder for institutions to maintain an educational development commitment which is substantially less than at other institutions. In Australia publications such as 'The Quality of Australian Higher Education' (1998) have provided benchmarks which expose lack of institutional commitment to teaching, where it occurs;
- less 'maverick' with less freedom to pursue personal interests and less scope to respond to the idiosyncratic interests of teaching enthusiasts but with a more planned strategic focus.

Overall, educational development will have more of an institutional role, concerned with the performance and development needs of the institution as a whole, rather than with individual teachers. For example, programmes for new teachers may be reconceptualised as tools of long term organisational development, growing the change agents of the future, rather than as staff development for individuals who now know how to give a lecture.

Whether any of this comes to pass, and whether educational developers are on board if it does, will depend in part on the

extent to which educational developers get actively involved in the construction of Learning and Teaching Strategies in the early stages, when the mould is set. Seize the day!

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Research Network

We have been keen for some time to develop the research side of SEDA's activities and to promote the scholarship of staff and educational development.

Elsewhere in this edition you will find an announcement for the latest round of SEDA Small Grants. These are to be awarded on the basis of proposals that best address the theme 'The scholarship of educational development and its application'.

Eighteen months ago we also formed a joint Educational Development Research Network together with the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE). As well as a successful conference last spring and two well-attended meetings in London, we are currently talking to publishers about a number of possible publications.

Our next meeting is planned for Monday 17 April in the Adsetts Centre at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU). Two and half years' ago SHU undertook a study of their recently built learning centre - the Adsetts Centre. The report of that study was entitled 'An evaluation of the functioning of the Adsetts Centre as an Integrated Learning Centre'. The aim of this meeting will not be so much to look at the findings of the evaluation as to examine the rationale, methodology and outcomes of the study. As such we will be looking at it as a case study of research and evaluation in a specific area. At an earlier meeting Graham Gibbs made a similar presentation around the theme of training new teachers in higher education.

We hope this meeting will provide an opportunity for those who find it more difficult to get to London to participate in the network. The meeting is likely to last from 10.30 am (registration) until about 3.30 p.m. Further details will be distributed on the Ed-Dev-Resnet and SEDA mailbase lists as well as in a number of mailings.

I have also had an offer to hold a meeting at Middlesex University, which will be gratefully taken up. If other institutions would also like to host a meeting of the SEDA / SRHE Educational Development Research Network then please let me know.

Ronald Macdonald FSEDA
Convenor, SEDA / SRHE Educational Development Research Network

Details of the Ed-Dev-Resnet mailbase, including joining instructions and message archives, can be found on their website at:

<http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists/ed-dev-resnet/>

When Good Teaching Becomes Outstanding ... The Pursuit of Excellence

Dr Brian Smith

Physics Department, University of Sussex

Outstanding teaching, like outstanding sex, is difficult to define satisfactorily, and if we are totally honest with ourselves, even harder to achieve on a regular basis. Both are the subject of myths and dreams: both are profoundly moving experiences for the participants: and both defy capture in a series of "how to" steps in an instruction manual.

It is also true that good, let alone outstanding, teaching is not something that can be generated with a hundred percent guarantee of success. Of course, the likelihood on given an occasion can be greatly increased by creating an environment in which learning can flourish - in which all the controllable factors are designed to facilitate the chosen objectives for the session, and teachers and taught are all committed to positive outcome. But even then the success or otherwise of a teaching activity depends on the chemical reaction that takes place in the group - the unique combination of personalities, motivations and connections, which largely determines the quality of the educational experience.

A teacher can prepare the contents of a session with due diligence, be consummately skilful in steering the processes in class, but the outcome is never totally predictable. Making such assertions is undoubtedly heretical in our rationalist society, but surely it is luck as well as judgement which determines the extent of which teaching is successful? But if this is the case, why is it that some teachers are consistently more likely to generate outstanding sessions than others? And what can be done to increase the chances of success? Before we can even begin to answer such questions we must first establish criteria for distinguishing between teaching that is 'competent' and teaching that is 'outstanding'.

Let us start by taking for granted that the primary function of teaching is to facilitate learning. Certain practical aspects can then immediately be identified as important and dealt with rapidly. For example, it is obvious that teachers should be well prepared for classes and arrive in good time - it doesn't always happen! It is also helpful if the physical setting is appropriate for the intended activities in terms of basic factors such as seating arrangements, A/V support equipment and room ventilation. Unfortunately, this is often not possible, and classes are then obliged to operate under less than ideal conditions.

Teachers should ensure that students are aware of the aims and objectives for each session - a task easily carried out, but often neglected. These and other similar

practical details affect classes negatively, because if they are not right they create dissatisfaction. In that sense they are similar to the hygiene factors in Herzberg's motivation theory. But conversely, the overall quality of the learning experience and its lasting impact on individuals in a positive sense depend far more on factors related to the teaching process itself (Herzberg's motivators).

So what does distinguish outstanding teaching from the (merely) competent variety? This is not the first time that the question has been posed, but finding a satisfactory answer seems especially important in the present climate because of the unusually high profile that teaching in Higher Education is currently enjoying. I suggest that the following criteria ought to be included when attempting to distinguish between the two.

A competent teacher presents information and plans class activities using concepts and language familiar to students. But the outstanding teacher goes further, by repackaging the information and introducing experiences which are highly motivating as they are directly linked to student interests.

The practice is similar to that of the professional journalist who appreciates the importance of engaging with the reader, listener or viewer by putting themselves in their shoes. The knack is being able to identify with the student perspective without losing sight of the basic course objectives. To accomplish this feat without lowering standards requires considerable skill in the classroom, and extensive preparation beforehand.

A competent teacher is aware that students develop skills by actively participating in activities and reflecting critically on their own progress. The outstanding teacher encourages individuals to learn also from the experiences of others - to extend the range of their knowledge and understanding vicariously by sensitively observing, noting and reviewing the activities of colleagues.

So often individuals switch off when the focus of attention is not on themselves, or lose interest when the immediate personal relevance of what is taking place escapes them. Mutual awareness and concern is the first step towards genuine collective learning, a powerful but rarely triggered learning dynamic, when the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts - a phenomenon sadly not often encountered in classroom situations.

A competent teacher endorses collaborative student work while being able to detect and discourage freeloaders. The outstanding teacher not only encourages collaboration, but insists on it.

Symbiosis is created within a group when it progresses beyond the mere pooling of information to the point when individuals become fully interactive. At this stage the group dynamic becomes powerful, and collective learning becomes both exciting and unpredictable. On these rare but precious occasions the teacher should be open to abandoning the session plan so as to go with the flow. The exhilaration associated with such an experience will wear off but the effect on participants is likely to be long lasting.

A competent teacher recognises that the preferred learning style will differ from student to student. An outstanding teacher facilitates 'deep learning' and also understands that there is often an emotional element which encourages or inhibits the capacity to learn.

Deep learning integrates what is being learned into what is known already. The emphasis is on making sense of what is being learned in terms of existing facts, feelings and frameworks. Studies have shown that even in a subject such as mathematics progress may be halted by emotional blockages over quite basic concepts such as fractions or negative numbers. Recognising and dealing with influence of non-intellectual factors on learning is an important piece of learning in itself, which needs to be shared with students.

A competent teacher nurtures students. The outstanding teacher also weans them so that increasingly they become independent.

Letting go can be difficult, even painful at times, but it is an important part of the teaching and learning process. Students need to develop into autonomous learners; confident and skilful in using the whole range of resources available to them, including their teachers. Introducing this developmental element into course design adds to its complexity and also to the work required in preparation.

The above discussion has been couched in terms of 'competent' and 'outstanding' rather than 'excellent'. This has been done for two reasons. The first is that the notion of excellence is extremely hard to define. There is a sense in which it is a by-product of outstanding teaching rather than existing as an entity in itself. For a full discus-

sion of the concept of excellence as applied to university teaching see the review article by Lewis Elton in the *International Journal for Academic Development*, volume 3, number 1, May 1998.

Secondly, the published lists of criteria for teaching excellence tend to be couched in phrases such as 'produces textbooks and teaching materials', or 'demonstrates a continuing commitment to the quality, development and improvement of teaching and learning'. It is not until an attempt is made to translate these generalisations into more practical terms that they become genuinely useful. We may argue about which practical criteria should be used but having reached a decision, it becomes much easier to evaluate behaviour by reference to defined norms and competencies rather than depend on abstract principles for guidance.

A competent teacher will be remembered with affection by the students. An outstanding teacher may not be remembered at all but the learning experience is likely to have changed student lives in some deep and significant way, perhaps in terms of knowledge, maybe attitude, probably motivation. Again, assuming that it is learning rather than teaching that is important, this should be reflected in the choice of criteria.

Outstanding teaching requires considerable effort and is expensive in terms of human resources. The final question must therefore be - to what extent can it be afforded in our current educational system, in which 'quality' is increasingly taken to mean 'adequate for the purpose' and staff-student ratios show no signs of improving? In spite of the recent hype given to teaching the realistic answer is probably 'not a lot'. We will no doubt continue to rely for examples of outstanding teaching on that relatively small band of enthusiasts who, at possible risk to their own university careers, are prepared to channel their energies into demonstrating what might be accomplished if we really were fully committed to its provision.

News from Napier University

The Educational Development Unit at Napier University has been redesignated the Educational Development Services (EDS). Still with Professor Fred Percival as Director and Shirley Earl as Senior Lecturer, EDS now incorporates flexible learning, will be a key driver for learning, teaching and assessment strategy, will expand learning and teaching research and maintain vital links with all campuses through increasing numbers of Teaching Fellows.

If you have any news you would like to share with our readership, please send it to the SEDA Office by fax (0121 415 6802) or e-mail (office@seda.demon.co.uk)

A new issue of the *International Journal for Academic Development (IJAD)*

IJAD is the *International Journal for Academic Development*. ('Academic Development' is taken to mean both staff development and educational development in higher education.) IJAD is published twice each year by Taylor & Francis for the International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED), an international network of national educational development organisations. The IJAD editors are Chris Knapper of Queens University, Ontario, and the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE); Patricia Weeks of Griffith University, Queensland, and the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA); and David Baume of The Open University and SEDA.

Volume 4.2 of IJAD has just been published. SEDA institutional members and Fellowship holders automatically receive copies as part of their membership. All SEDA members are also invited to subscribe to the journal at the much reduced rate of £22 (rather than the normal personal subscription rate of £28).

Please contact the SEDA Office by fax on 0121 415 6802 or by e-mail at office@seda.demon.co.uk if you wish to take advantage of this offer.

Issue 4.2

Papers in the current issue are:

The Impact of Individual Consultation on Student Ratings of Teaching

Sergio Piccinin, Carolina Cristi, and Marcia McCoy

Ninety-one professors over a seven-year period consulted with an academic developer in a Canadian University. The paper shows how the changes these professors made to their practice increased student ratings of their teaching. A valuable paper showing that academic development works!

Australasian Academic Developers: Entry into the profession and our own professional development

Kym Fraser

A survey of 71 developers in Australasian institutions reviews their career paths, qualifications and professional development.

On Becoming an Academic Developer: A personal journey

Lorraine Stefani

The emergence of a profession of academic development brings benefits and risks. One lecturer's journey into academic development charts these.

These two papers, from Australia and Scotland respectively, provide fascinating

and complementary accounts of the process of becoming an academic developer.

Educational Development in Economics

Hilton J Fransman

A survey of the independent learning skills of students in South Africa, their expectations of lectures and their perceptions of economics, led to the development of independent learning materials.

Leading the Horse to the Water: Teacher training for all teachers in a faculty of Health Sciences

Marie-Louise Schreurs, Herma Roebertsen, Peter AJ Bouhuijs

High-level leadership, financial reward to departments, careful programme design and a career structure favouring teaching all contributed to high participation in training for teaching at the University of Maastricht.

Faculty Development: Experiences and issues in a Norwegian perspective

Kirsten Hofgaard Lycke

How has faculty development developed in Norway? How have national priorities and international debate on academic development influenced it?

The Application of Gestalt to Organisational Interventions in Universities

Bob Matthew and Pete Sayers

Gestalt, originally developed for counselling and therapy, has applications in academic development. It can address some of the problems of working effectively within a University in England.

The Work of an Academic: Jack of all trades, or master of one?

David Staniforth and Tony Harland

How can a University provide effective academic development on teaching and learning for academics whose interests and responsibilities also range widely over research and administration? From the experience in England the authors of this paper advise a focus on the similarities between teaching, research and administration.

The issue also contains book reviews (edited by Ray Land of Edinburgh University), and news about ICED and its member organisations.

Writing a paper for IJAD

The journal is interested to receive papers and proposals for papers about any aspect of academic development.

For the notes on guidance for authors please contact David Baume by e-mail at a.d.baume@open.ac.uk

A Personal Response to "SEDA Goes Global"

Dr Patricia Weeks FSEDA

Educational Designer, Multimedia Unit, Griffith University

As I sit here at my desk on this beautiful warm sunny summer Queensland day reading my November 1999 SEDA Newsletter I am particularly interested by the article "SEDA Goes Global" by Shirley Earl. My interest in this article lies mainly in the fact that I have just recently had the good fortune to be a part of the SEDA Recognition team for a university in Australia. One, in fact, which Shirley discusses in this article. My interest also lies in the fact that I am one of the "Global SEDA" people and I welcome the introduction of video conferencing, which Shirley also discusses, to improve my communication with other members of SEDA.

Shirley's article describes and discusses how SEDA tries to meet the needs of its international members by organising a combination of electronic negotiation and video conference (VC) training for a recent Australian recognition. Shirley notes that "cultural differences began to appear" when trying to organise VC training.

I agree there are cultural differences. Some I have noticed in relation to the SEDA requirements for both Teacher Accreditation and the Fellowship are:

- The SEDA scheme is not well known or well understood in wider academia outside the UK.
- Graduate and Postgraduate Certificate students are sometimes not aware of the underpinning SEDA philosophy, values and principles. They are not easily made transparent and visible.
- Language can be a barrier. For example, in Australia we talk mainly about "diversity" and less about practicing equal opportunities. In Singapore this statement appears to mean more about religion and less about gender.
- In the British system an external examiner is a requirement for courses in higher education. This is not a requirement in Australia and so it makes it difficult for those of us trying to have our courses recognised to know who to put in the box marked "External Examiner".
- Most graduate certificate programs in Australia would not teach their students how to perform their teaching support and academic administrative tasks. Therefore is it appropriate for us to ask our students to demonstrate that they are capable of doing this? Likewise, how can we assess them?

This list is not exhaustive. It is merely a selection "off the top of my head" of the cultural differences I have noticed over my years of involvement with SEDA. I believe

all these cultural differences can be overcome through discussion and negotiation. If left as they are, for some the differences may continue to be off putting.

I would hope that if we talk to each other using VC on a more regular basis then maybe we can overcome the isolation some of us may feel from our UK counterparts. In this way, hopefully we can begin to understand each other better. This will be a two way process. Firstly, SEDA will be able to communicate to international members their requirements and secondly, international members can explain the cultural differences to SEDA. Maybe then we can begin to break down some of these differences.

How I wish that the electronic medium for training had been available when the course I previously co-ordinated was recognised. It would have made life much easier. I also wish it had been available when I prepared my portfolio for my SEDA Fellowship - how I would have loved to talk to someone about it and not just by e-mail. Shirley's article declares the training (after several setbacks) to be a success for the institution undertaking recognition and I know from talking to the participants this end that the VC training was very useful for them.

I suggest that using VC training prior to recognition will help participants to understand that the scheme is developmental, transparent and rigorous. It will help them to understand exactly what is expected in the mapping document and during the interview process. Having so few examples on our doorstep means that we cannot (figuratively speaking) go next door to see what is meant for example by showing variety, depth and breadth. But examples could be shown during a VC training session and questions could be asked and answered immediately instead of leaving them until in some situations it all becomes too hard. I can think of a couple of people from my own institution who have considered going for the SEDA Fellowship but without a support network here it is difficult to keep the momentum going (not that I am suggesting it is easy in the UK!).

In my own role now at Griffith University, Gold Coast we use VC for meetings with other campuses and the medium works very well. I can see no reason why we cannot extend that to regular international meetings. Video conferencing is a more personal way of communicating compared with e-mail. It is easier to clarify points immediately as often an answer will lead to another question. It provides for a more free flowing information stream. It is a way of instantaneously sharing ideas and opinions. Also, being able to hear and see people helps to put names to faces and

improve communication. With e-mail as you cannot see the person, you have no idea what they feel and sometimes there is a delay in getting a response.

In the past, when nominations for executive officers have been called for by SEDA it is obviously, because of associated costs to either them or their institutions, out of the question for anyone who is not UK based to put up their hand for the position. But why not? As we have the option of communicating by VC SEDA could encourage nominations to its executive by those who do not live in the UK. In this way, surely the cultural differences and other barriers would gradually begin to disappear as they could be discussed openly as and when they occurred and SEDA would truly "go global".

I have had the good fortune last year to visit Temasek Polytechnic in Singapore to undertake the external examiner role for their SEDA accredited course. Whilst there, I also assessed a Fellowship portfolio - how much easier all of this would have been with video conferencing before hand. In one of the SEDA newsletters I read where someone had demonstrated their ability to uphold the SEDA Fellowship values and principles by creating an electronic reflective portfolio - again, what a good idea, especially for those of us who live so far apart from each other.

Personal visits to other institutions are highly effective but have to be limited due to the extensive travel involved. I commend Shirley Earl and her SEDA colleagues for instigating the first VC training in Australia for SEDA recognition. She and we have followed it up so we now have a small trained core of potential SEDA recognisers here. With loose groupings of SEDA folk associating with different universities and colleges around the world, virtual communication for all of us through electronic technology such as VC is likely to be among the suite of options favoured by global SEDA participants.

Where possible, I believe the use of technology will help to open up the communication channels with others early on in their SEDA recognition or Fellowship process. Nothing I hope will completely replace face-to-face visits. All of my experiences with either having SEDA UK personnel visiting my institution or my visiting other institutions have been so rewarding and so good for my own professional development that I would not have missed them for the world. Surely in this age of information technology we should model using it and see how it can help SEDA to become a more flexible, internationally focused professional association and help each other to build our "global SEDA community".

Forthcoming SEDA Conferences and Events

SEDA Spring Conference
"Reaching Out"
 10 - 12 April 2000
 Coventry University TechnoCentre

SEDA / SRHE Educational Development Reserach Network Meeting
 17 April 2000
 Sheffield Hallam University

SEDA One Day Event
Key Skills
 18 May 2000
 Sheffield Hallam University

8th SEDA Annual General Meeting and Workshops
 24 May 2000
 Burlington Hotel, Birmingham

SEDA Scotland Conference
 19 June 2000
 University of Dundee

SEDA Winter Conference
5th Annual Conference for Staff and Educational Developers
 21 - 22 November 2000
 Manchester Conference Centre

'On Reflection ... Professional Development for the Future'

22 - 23 November 1999
 The Manchester Conference Centre

On November 22 - 23 last year SEDA hosted its fourth Annual Conference for Staff and Educational Developers. Manchester Conference Centre was the location for the second year running and will continue as the venue for the next November Conference (21 - 22).

The Conference was attended by over 160 participants from the United Kingdom, Ireland and overseas and provided an opportunity for both formal and informal discussion and networking.

The Conference was opened by Professor Martin Harris, Vice Chancellor of the University of Manchester. In his address Professor Harris emphasised the importance of continuing professional development to the future development of the university sector.

The Conference Committee was delighted that the opening interactive keynote was given by Professor Sally Brown, Director of Membership Services at the Institute for Learning and Teaching. Throughout the conference Sally was willingly 'on call' to respond to participants' questions about the ILT. The second Conference Keynote was given by Professor Robin Middlehurst, Director of the Centre for Continuing Education at the University of Surrey, who stressed the need for ongoing professional development related to effective leadership. Professor Graham Gibbs, Director of

Research in the Centre for Higher Education Practice at the Open University, gave the final keynote which focused upon the opportunities and challenges for staff and educational developers in relation to institutional learning and teaching strategies.

Dr Sarah Mann from the University of Stirling enthralled participants with her whole-conference paper 'Reflections on Alternative Perspectives on Professional Practice and Development'.

A range of well evaluated interactive workshops and seminars were led on the four key themes of the Conference: Administration and Management, Learning and Teaching, Scholarship and Research, and Staff and Educational Development. For the first time the Conference Committee established a pre- and post-conference Web Board to increase opportunities to consider these themes and issues. The Conference Committee particularly appreciated the work of Bland Tomkinson in initiating this development.

The Conference Dinner Reception was held in the handsome and august surroundings of the UMIST Entrance Hall where participants were treated to the music of a saxophone quartet. During the reception SEDA Roll of Honour presentations were made to Carole Baume FSEDA, Sally Brown FSEDA, Joyce Barlow FSEDA and Phil Race. Rachel Hudson (University of Bath) and Mary Thorpe (The Open University) were awarded their SEDA Fellowship certificates.

The next SEDA Conference, 'Reaching Out' will take place at Coventry University's TechnoCentre from 10 - 12 April 2000. Speakers will include Professor Paul Ramsden (University of Sydney), Professor Freda Tallantyre (University of Derby) and Lord Dearing (University for Industry).

As I come to the end of my two year term as Chair of the SEDA Conference Committee I would like to express good wishes to my successor, Rakesh Bhanot, and to warmly thank all of the Committee Members, in particular Kerry Phillips, for their ideas, work and good humour. Finally, may I remind readers that the Conference Committee extends a welcome to new members; if you would like further information please contact me at the e-mail address below.

Kristine Mason O'Connor
 Chair, SEDA Conference Committee
 (kmoconnor@chelt.ac.uk)

SEDA Scotland

Following their very successful first conference, held in Edinburgh on 7 June 1999 with the theme 'Critical Reflection in Action', the SEDA Scotland Steering Group are pleased to announce the details of this year's event.

The conference will be held on 19 June 2000 at the University of Dundee and will be around the theme of **Reflection in Learning**.

It is planned that the SEDA Scotland conference will become an annual event which will move around Scotland taking place at a different institution each year.

Anyone interested in hosting the 2001 conference or becoming involved with the organisation of this year's event should contact Dr Lorraine Stefani at Strathclyde University (l.stefani@strath.ac.uk) for more information.

The Steering Group are always looking to welcome new members. Meetings are mostly held via teleconferencing so travel costs can be kept to a minimum. Again anyone interested in joining the Group should contact Dr Lorraine Stefani at Strathclyde University for more information (l.stefani@strath.ac.uk).

www.seda.demon.co.uk/scotland

Accreditation: the ILT and SEDA Developments

Many of SEDA's recognised programmes have taken advantage of the accreditation arrangements made between SEDA and ILT. By the end of January 2000, 19 SEDA programmes have received accreditation from ILT. SEDA has been continuing its work in support of the ILT and the latest result is agreement for SEDA Fellowship holders to gain membership of ILT. If you hold a SEDA Fellowship you need only fill in part one of the membership form (and pay your membership fee). More details are available from the ILT web site <http://www.ilt.ac.uk>

Many SEDA Fellowship holders will be taking advantage of this route as they are already in various ways committed to working with the ILT. A number of Fellowship holders are, for example, ILT Accreditors. Many more are programme leaders for SEDA and ILT accredited courses. The next step for SEDA is to work on gaining

ILT Accreditation for SEDA Associate teachers and for those who have gained SEDA accreditation through the Professional Development in Higher Education (PDHE) scheme. This is taking more time as the ILT are currently working on their own model for Associate membership.

While SEDA will continue to work closely with ILT and support its development, we are also continuing to develop our own accreditation work. A vibrant area for development is our international work. Towards the end of 1999 a further teacher accreditation programme was recognised in Australia (taking the total to 7 overseas) and Koh-Kwok Wan Yee, from Temasek Polytechnic in Singapore, was awarded her SEDA Fellowship. And we continue to participate in events organised by the International Consortium for Educational Developments (ICED) of which SEDA is a member.

A further area of development is in relation to specialist areas such as research supervision and information communication technology (ICT). These have provided opportunities for partnership arrangements with the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), the EFFECTS TLTP project and the Association for Learning Technologies (ALT).

People who are interested to know more can view the EFFECTS web site at

<http://sh.plym.ac.uk/eds/effects>

or contact the SEDA Office who will put you in touch with the relevant development group.

Dr Liz Beaty FSEDA
Co-Chair of SEDA

Reflections on the Process of Gaining SEDA Recognition for Coventry University's PgC in Learning and Teaching in HE

Rakesh Bhanot
Course Tutor, Centre for Educational Development, Coventry University

"curriculum designers are always behind the times because they do not understand how to adapt education to social change."

(Golby, Greenwald and West (1982)
Curriculum Design, p3. Croom Helm and OU)

Gaining SEDA recognition has been a team effort; the 'team' being both fellow tutors and administrative colleagues as well as the 'recognisers'. Writing this summary is proving to be a more lonely and painful exercise since I feel that I am gripped by some kind of educational angst which requires me to come up with something profound about the recognition process.

(A mere mechanical description of the process will not do (why not?). There's a little devil telling me that I should include something about what I gained - or lost - in the exercise.)

However, it is important to explain the context / background prior to SEDA recognition. While I am not new to staff and educational development, I am (still) relatively new to Coventry and to the course which was being redesigned when I joined the Educational Development Unit (now Centre for Educational Development) in 1998. Hitherto, new academic staff in the University were required to complete an

in-house Certificate in Teaching and Learning. September 1998 saw the introduction of the newly validated PgC in Learning and Teaching in HE. This had been designed to take into account both the Dearing recommendations and SEDA values and objectives, as well as the latest developments in educational technology, viz., on-line learning.

My apprehensions concerning SEDA recognition arose from both the newness of the course and my 'lack of experience' in delivering it. However, the following factors lessened the stress:

- working with an experienced SEDA colleague (co-incidentally Co-Chair of SEDA)
- the assistance provided at the briefing session run by SEDA
- two thoroughly professional recognisers who offered critical but constructive suggestions
- a model for the SEDA mapping from another institution.

I must admit I was expecting to have to provide much more detail in the mapping document than was finally required but the exercise in itself proved to be of immense value in evaluating or re-evaluating some of the course content and methodology. This will lead to some adjustments to the

course next year even though we were congratulated on "the clarity" of our documentation.

Both recognisers visited our Unit on at least one occasion and we were able to discuss many of their comments prior to the final submission. In addition, the phone, e-mail and the fax machine proved to be invaluable in clarifying some of the points, and the willingness of the recognisers to be available at short notice made the task much easier.

Now, where is that profound insight that I was looking for? Being a believer in the idea that learning can take place by stealth, a number of points come to mind. One, the fact that the recognisers are practising teachers on similar courses gives credence to their comments and insights; two, the process - especially attending the SEDA briefing session, brings you into contact with other schemes and this enables useful exchanges of ideas and strategies which can allow us to keep abreast of new developments; and finally, the mapping exercise enables the course tutors to engage with SEDA values and objectives before encouraging the course participants to provide evidence for these. In short, the exercise made me question the 'eternal verity' and validity of my own saber-tooth curriculum*.

* The Saber-tooth Curriculum by J. A. Peddiwell, 1939

SEDA Scheme for Professional Development in Higher Education (PDHE)

The PDHE, developed by a number of higher education (HE) institutions, has been established for about three years and builds on the expertise acquired in other SEDA accreditation schemes. Potentially, it has a broad range, covering all functions and aspects of HE except for staff involved in teaching and educational development activities. This has provided institutions with the opportunity to develop coherent and tailor made accredited programmes of staff development for functional groups such as finance, marketing or teaching support staff, or for categories of staff such as technicians, administrators, caretakers, academics (outside their teaching responsibilities) or managers. In addition, programmes may be developed for groups of staff at any stage in their careers and therefore institutions are investigating the development of induction programmes around the PDHE framework, or programmes for more established or mid-career staff.

The aims of the PDHE are to:

- seek to accredit the practice of working in HE,
- build bridges between different categories of staff in HE,
- encourage staff to reflect on their working practices,
- develop an understanding of the wider contexts within which HE functions,
- provide a developmental, portable qualification for staff in HE,
- complement other professional, vocational or academic qualifications already held, or currently being pursued.

The PDHE's singular quality is that it provides individual participants with an opportunity to consider and identify what is the uniqueness of working in the HE sector. There are a myriad of qualifications available to staff working in HE, but it is the PDHE which is sector specific and seeks in a developmental way to encourage participants to review and reflect what makes HE different, from other public services and indeed commercial enterprises. This is particularly pertinent when many staff move between sectors and have experience of working life beyond that of higher education.

A further feature of the PDHE is that many of the programmes are being developed to provide participants with an opportunity to obtain dual accreditation. Therefore, a number of programmes recognised by SEDA are also accredited by their own

institutions, and may even provide accreditation by other qualifications. If individuals are working towards a professional qualification within their own discipline or function, the PDHE may provide the opportunity for reviewing the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired from that qualification within the particular environment of higher education.

Institutions are finding this a useful framework because it provides an opportunity to encourage staff to develop their understanding of the wider context within which they work and within which their institution is operating. This leads to better informed staff who are likely to be more motivated and committed to the institution. In addition, it can help an institution if it is working towards a quality standard such as Investors in People, the Business Excellence Award or the Charter Mark.

At present, there are seven recognised schemes, offered by a range of institutions, including a management programme which is tied in with that institution's Masters course; a programme for technical staff which is similarly tied into the institution's own qualification; a programme specifically targeted at the provision of continuing professional development to a range of clerical, administrative and technical staff; and an umbrella programme which provides three pathways for different categories of staff. Further programmes are being developed, which continually identify new and innovative formats in terms of the content, context and functions.

Another key feature of the PDHE is the requirement for staff to reflect on their working practices. The significance of this feature cannot be underestimated, since it assists in the gradual embedding of the philosophy and activity of continuing professional development into a range of activities within higher education.

This also raises the, as yet unresolved, issue of whether working in higher education outside the teaching and research function, may be regarded as a profession. Work currently being undertaken by the Association of University Administrators (AUA) on the establishment of a continuing professional development programme for its members is raising the profile of this debate. With approximately 170,000 staff working in UK higher education outside the teaching and research function, this provides exciting opportunities for the further development and innovation of the PDHE framework.

Jeannette Collins
Chair, SEDA PDHE Committee

SEDA Committee Changes

February sees a change of Chair for three of SEDA's committees.

Firstly, Dr Rhona Sharpe FSEDA (the Open University) will take over from Carole Baume FSEDA (also of the Open University) as Chair of the SEDA Fellowships Committee. Rhona has been a member of the SEDA Teacher Accreditation Committee since 1996, acting as Finance Officer for the past two years. Rhona gained her Fellowship in 1999 being the first (and so far only) candidate to submit her portfolio on CD-ROM! Carole has been Chair of the Committee, in a care-taker role, for twelve months. However, she was the first Fellowships Committee Chair when the scheme was launched in 1994 and has continued as an active Committee member since that time.

Kristine Mason O'Connor (Cheltenham and Gloucester College) also comes to the end of her term of office as Chair of the SEDA Conference Committee. Taking on the role in 1998, Kristine has overseen the organisation of three highly successful residential SEDA conferences during this time. Kristine's successor, Rakesh Bhanot (Coventry University), is also no stranger to organising SEDA events having chaired the planning groups for the May 1995 conference held at the University of Luton and the forthcoming April 2000 event.

Professor Chris O'Hagan (University of Derby) will be handing over the Chair of the Publications Committee to Neill Thew (University of Birmingham). Chris has been a member of the Committee since SEDA publications began in 1993 and was a member of the SCED Committee before that. He became Chair and Finance Officer in 1997 and the same year introduced SEDA Specials to the SEDA Publications portfolio. Neill joined the Publications Committee in 1998.

We would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank all the outgoing Chairs for all the effort, energy and time they have put into the work of their respective committees, and hope that they will continue as active members of those committees. And, of course, we would like to welcome the new Chairs as they take over.

If you are interested in becoming a member one of the above SEDA Committees or becoming involved in any area of SEDA's work, please contact the SEDA Office in the first instance who will be happy to give you details of meeting dates and put you in touch with the relevant SEDA Committee Chair.

A Developer's Guide to Major National Initiatives

Introduction and Part One - HEFCE

Carole Baume FSEDA, Director of the National Co-ordination Team for the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) and the Teaching and Learning Technology Programme (TLTP), Centre for Higher Education Practice, The Open University

David Baume FSEDA, Director of Courses, Centre for Higher Education Practice, The Open University

Introduction to the series

You are a developer. You may be a developer and innovator in your own practice as a teacher or supporter of student learning. You may be a course leader or head of department or senior academic manager who has responsibility for the development of staff and educational processes. Or you may be a part time or full time staff developer or educational developer.

There are lots of major national initiatives. How can you use these to gain funding for your development work or the development work of colleagues? How can you gain access to and use the results of these funded initiatives in teaching and learning in higher education?

This series will guide you through the alphabet soup of the main national initiatives, and suggest ways in which you can engage with them and with their outcomes.

We are starting the series with the initiatives we know best, those funded by the

Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). What follows is a personal and partial account of funding through the HEFCE.

Future articles in the series will concentrate on the work of particular groups, funding bodies or organisations such as the other three Higher Education Funding Bodies, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT) as well as describing other HEFCE supported work. Please let us know if you feel able to write an account of one or more initiatives of which you have particular knowledge.

We want this series to be a sharing of knowledge, ideas and experience on national initiatives and how to use them among the developers' community.

Overview of HEFCE

The Higher Education Funding Council for England is the primary funding body for Higher Education in England. Its annual budget for 1999-2000 is some £4.22bn, of which some £2.92bn will be spent on teaching and learning through the block

grant. Of this, £26m in 1999-2000 is devoted to special initiatives through the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund - implementing institutional strategies and rewarding individual excellence (£14.5m), FDTL Phase 3 (£3m), the Learning and Teaching Support Network (£5m), National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (£1m) and commitments to existing FDTL and TLTP projects (£2.5m). Additional sums are available for special projects such as widening participation and supporting students with disabilities.

The Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund

There are three strands to this Fund:

An **institutional** strand, which helps HEIs to develop and implement learning and teaching strategies. For more on this see Graham Gibbs' article in this issue of *Educational Developments* (p 1-5).

A **subject** strand, which promotes innovation and sharing of good practice in the disciplines. It does this through Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) and Teaching and Learning Technology Programme (TLTP), and

Organisation	Initiative	Web site
HEFCE	Institutional Learning and Teaching Strategies (ILTS)	http://www.ncteam.ac.uk/ilts/
HEFCE's Learning and Teaching Strategy delivered through the allocation of funds from the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF)	Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL)	http://www.ncteam.ac.uk/fdtl.html
	Teaching and Learning Technology Programme (TLTP)	http://www.ncteam.ac.uk/tltp.html
	Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) managed through the ILT	http://www.ilt.ac.uk/ltsn/index.htm
	National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS), developed jointly with ILT	Web page will soon be available through the ILT site
HEFCE	Widening Participation	http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/hefce/1999/pr%2Dgrant.htm
HEFCE	Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities	http://www.hefce.ac.uk/docs/new/slidd/siall.htm
HEFCE's contribution to JISC	Various - see text	http://www.jisc.ac.uk

through the new Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN). The LTSN will be managed through the Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT).

An **individual** strand, which encourages HEIs to recognise and reward excellent teaching and learning support through institutional learning and teaching strategies. Additionally the HEFCE has given £1m to the ILT to run the National Teaching Fellowships Scheme (NTFS). This scheme will start in 2000, and details will be announced shortly.

We'll concentrate here on FDTL, TLTP and the LTSN.

Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL)

What's in FDTL for the developer?

FDTL Phase One's 44 projects are complete or nearing completion and most of the 19 Phase Two projects are into their final year. These projects have produced large quantities of useful resources for teachers and developers. Find them through <http://www.ncteam.ac.uk>. Examples from Phase One include:

- Ideas and resources for **assessment** (eg. Saphe for self assessment in Law and Social Work based at Bristol; PLIM for peer assessment in Music at Ulster; TRIADS for computer-based assessment, based at Liverpool; and 'Assessment and the Expanded Text' in English and related subjects at Northumbria).
- CD-ROMS and videos on **student projects and placements** in Computing (eg. PROF@T at Teesside, EPCOS at Kent and ISSN at Sheffield).
- Help with **developing students' writing** (eg. 'Speak-write' at Anglia and 'The Professional Writer' at Sheffield Hallam).
- **Staff development** resources on many topics (eg. key skills at Newcastle; professional development at London Business School; language assistants at Birmingham).
- **Student learning resources** (eg. on Geography at Liverpool Hope; Geography, Geology and Environmental Studies at Plymouth; Languages at Liverpool John Moores and Hull).

Materials are being produced through FDTL Phases One and Two for teachers in Anthropology, Applied Social Work, Architecture, Business and Management Studies, Chemical Engineering, Chemistry, Computer Studies, English, Environmental Studies, Geography, Geology, Law, History, Linguistics, Mechanical Engineering, Modern Languages, Music, Social Policy, and Sociology.

Unfortunately it's too late now to bid for funding under Phase Three of FDTL. However, the successful projects will be announced by HEFCE in May 2000. Do check the list of successful projects at <http://www.hefce.ac.uk>. Then:

- If there is a project in your institution, do encourage and support their work, whether or not you helped to write the bid!
- If there is a project in your subject area, do contact the project leader and offer help, for example through piloting materials, hosting workshops, telling your department about it.
- If there is a project on a topic you are wrestling with, such as the introduction of key skills into your course or developing your students' employability, then again you are probably just what the project is looking for - do get in touch with the project leader!

There will be future phases of FDTL to follow future rounds of subject review. The schedule is listed on the QAA web site <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>

Teaching and Learning Technology Programme (TLTP)

This Programme, which began in 1992, has supported 76 projects to develop large quantities of computer-based learning materials. More information on TLTP also through <http://www.hefce.ac.uk>. The 32 projects in the current (third) phase focus on the use of these materials in a widening range of HEIs. Three examples:

- CHIC at Teesside is working with Universities of Glasgow, Greenwich, Sheffield, Warwick, West of England, Bristol, University College Worcester and the TLTP 2 History Project to widen the use of computer-based History tutorials. The project aims to evolve a distinctive pedagogy for integrating the TLTP History tutorials developed by the History Courseware Consortium within the mainstream History curriculum of UK higher education. Rather than simply exporting current courseware, a method unlikely to succeed, CHIC is working with the partner institutions as they tailor the courseware to their own topics and educational approaches.

If, as a developer, you have links with your History department, you could usefully encourage them to contact CHIC.

- Project GOLD (Guidance Online for those Learning at a Distance) involves The Royal College of Nursing Institute, The University of Bath Centre for Development of New Technologies in Learning and The Open Learning Foundation. It is developing the use of technologies such as multimedia, the web, e-mail and on-line conferencing to improve the distance learning experience for both tutors and students.

The focus for the project is a distance learning course for nurses, run by the Royal College of Nursing. One of the aims of the project is to investigate the real-world issues encountered in trying to improve a learning environment using these new technologies. Another is to ensure that participants who are not confident with IT become comfortable with the technologies - as aids to learning rather than barriers - as quickly as possible.

Clearly of great interest and use to developers working in nurse education, GOLD may also have useful ideas and resources for those supporting the introduction of learning technologies into distance learning in a wide range of subjects.

- Computer Assisted Assessment (CAA), based at Luton, aims to help staff in higher education with the development and implementation of CAA. Other project members are Glasgow, Loughborough and Oxford Brookes Universities. The aim is to develop a Centre which will act as a focus for CAA in higher education, providing a one-stop shop which offers up-to-date knowledge of CAA activities; strategic advice on the implementation of CAA; guidance evaluating the cost and learning effectiveness of CAA; consultancy on the implementation and evaluation of CAA; generic and subject-specific workshops; models for the implementation of CAA; and staff development and training materials.

A project which many educational developers will find themselves using.

Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN)

The LTSN is in the process of being established. It will be managed through the ILT and details will be published through the ILT web-site <http://www.ilt.ac.uk/ltsn/index.htm>. The LTSN's 24 subject centres will act as a focus for teaching and learning in the disciplines. They will bring to the subject specialist in a department a range of good practice in the teaching, learning and assessment of their subject. Complementing them, a Generic Learning and Teaching Centre (GLTC) at the ILT in York will research and share ideas about teaching, learning and assessment which apply to a wide range of subjects. Supporting this Centre will be a Technology Implementation Centre concerned with C&IT for learning and teaching. More about these developments in a future article in this series.

HEFCE's work with JISC

Additionally, the HEFCE works with the other three national funding bodies and the Further Education Funding Council in the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). JISC aims "to stimulate and enable the cost effective exploitation of informa-

tion systems and to provide a high quality national network infrastructure for the UK higher education and research councils communities", to quote from the JISC web site at <http://www.jisc.ac.uk>.

The JISC currently has five committees, of which these three are probably the most important for educational developers:

- JISC Committee for Awareness, Liaison and Training (JCALT), which runs JISC-ASSIST (designed to do what its title suggests!); the Communications and Information Strategies Steering Group (to help HEIs produce their own communications and IT strategies); and a programme of funded projects (including staff development for the use of C&IT).
- JISC Committee for Electronic Information (JCEI), which "seeks to assist JISC in its goal to position UK HE to take best advantage of the information society through leading the development of a managed environment for accessing quality assured electronic information resources." (ibid) This committee develops the Distributed National Electronic Resource (DNER) and oversees the work of such initiatives as The Electronic Libraries Programme (eLib).
- JISC Committee for Integrated Environments for Learners (JCIEL), with a mission to "evaluate and pilot novel technologies of relevance to learning and teaching and encourage the integration of IT based applications to improve student support systems." (ibid).

The other two committees are the JISC Committee for Authentication and Security (JCAS) and the JISC Committee for Networking (JCN).

The work of JISC, and in particular its funded development projects, will be described in a future article in this series.

Finally...

This article has focused on some major elements of HEFCE's work to support teaching and learning development, work on which developers can build. We shall cover the initiatives on Widening Participation and Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities, and the work of other agencies, in future articles. To do this we'll need your help. Together we can build a much more comprehensive map of a territory that offers rich opportunities for developers.

To contact Carole or David please e-mail them at the following addresses:

c.baume@open.ac.uk
or
a.d.baume@open.ac.uk

Thirteen Tips for Successful Supervision of Undergraduate Dissertations

Professor Jennifer Rowley

School of Management and Social Sciences, Edge Hill University College

Abstract

This article draws on extensive experience of undergraduate supervision, as a basis for the formulation of guidelines for practice in the supervision of undergraduate dissertations and major projects. The underlying philosophy is that supervision is a partnership between student and supervisor. Undergraduate projects of this nature are often the first major piece of work attempted by a student. They benefit from a structured approach to supervision, and some may look to the supervisor to help them with structuring their work and their approach to the work. The thirteen points offer practical suggestions as to how this can be achieved.

Introduction

Many undergraduate courses in the social sciences, humanities and vocational disciplines, such as business and management studies and information systems offer students the opportunity to undertake a significant piece of work in their final year, which is termed a dissertation or a project by independent study. Typically such a piece of work will be equivalent to one or two other modules, and the assessment will depend entirely, or almost entirely, upon the quality of the submission of a significant piece of written work, possibly of the order of 10,000 words in length. Indeed, the ability to complete such a piece of work used to be seen (and still is seen in some countries in the world) as evidence of the 'honours worthiness' of the student, and differentiates the student entered for an ordinary award from those entered for an honours award. Clearly then, such dissertations are an important piece of work, and for many students it will be the first piece of substantial work that they undertake by independent study. Yet the quality of the support which students may receive to assist them in the production of a piece of work of good quality is extremely variable. Typically, a number of staff in a Department will be allocated a few students each year to supervise. Unlike other approaches to teaching and the creation of an effective learning environment, dissertation supervision is often subject to little discussion, sharing of experience or even peer and external observation. Supervisors are left to develop their own style and approaches. A responsible and organised Department will prepare the students through a research

methodology module earlier in the course, and a dissertation module guide, which explains some of the basics of working on and writing a dissertation. But then it is over to the supervisor. This article suggests 13 tips which might assist supervisors to contextualise and reflect on their practice. The tips emerge from many years involvement with dissertation supervision, and the supervision of other major projects, such as software projects in the context of courses in information systems.

1. Make sure that the students understand that interaction with their tutor is not an optional extra. The surest way to fail a dissertation is not to touch base with a supervisor. Most of the students who think that they can complete a dissertation without consultation think that the dissertation is an easy option and have totally underestimated the amount of work that is required (and are probably leaving it to the last minute). One way of ensuring that students touch base with a supervisor is to allocate a small percentage of the marks (say 10%) for the way in which the student manages the relationship with the supervisor, or for a short reflection on the process of managing the dissertation activity. In this age of electronic communication between students in different institutions and on a variety of courses, any dissertation that is submitted without prior contact with the supervisor should be critically examined to assess whether it is the student's own work.

2. Manage and structure the process for the student; the supervisor can assist the student to break down what seems a mammoth task to the students into manageable pieces. Typical stages in the process might be:

- Identification of a research question;
- Preparation of a literature review;
- Design of a data collection approach and, where appropriate, tools such as interviews and questionnaires;
- Writing up results from questionnaires;
- Discussion of results and formulation of conclusions.

Indeed, the above 5 stages might be seen as the topics of a possible five meetings that the student may have with the supervisor. On the other hand, the research spiral suggests that students will need to revisit each of these stages, and that some of the stages will proceed in parallel.

3. Encourage students to make good use of the supervision meeting, by agreeing the objectives of the meeting at the beginning. At the close of one meeting, it is important to agree what the student will do before the next meeting. Clearly progress with these tasks will be one of the topics at the next meeting, as will an exploration of the next steps that a student needs to undertake. Book the next appointment at the close of the last meeting. Keep the appointment.

4. On the other hand, be flexible. The student needs to understand that it is their dissertation. Enthusiastic and organised students may have completed some of the above stages prior to initial contact with a supervisor. Students who have been accustomed to doing projects at earlier stages in their study will often be keen to prepare and conduct data collection, before they have worked out a research question, or conducted a literature review. Always encourage and reward such enthusiasm. This is the time to invoke the research spiral, and to recognise that students can enter the process at different points.

5. Accommodate the students need to feel that progress is being made, by encouraging them to start writing the dissertation from the very early days. Ideally they should write the literature review first, and then move on to a methodology chapter. This approach also means that the supervisor has an early opportunity to go through written work that the student has produced. Encourage the submission of drafts, but discourage the over dependent student from seeking too much, and too frequent feedback.

6. Ensure that the student has a research question. This concept can be interpreted very liberally in order to accommodate different contexts and topics, but it is intended to encourage the student to think about what they want to know. Typically students start the dissertation process with a research topic or title, say, Marketing in Small Businesses. This gives them a good basis for identifying that they need to be acquainted with the literature on Marketing in Small Businesses, and that they might seek to collect some data from small businesses about their marketing activities. It does not, however, give the student any insights into the way to structure their literature review, and what questions to ask in any data gathering exercise. A topic, rather than a question, tends to lead to a lack of focus which students find difficult to manage. On the other hand, supervisors and students need to understand that the research question may evolve during the research process. Students may also have a collection of sub questions, which contribute to the key research question; these may be useful in structuring the data collection tool and data analysis.

7. Encourage students to collect some original data. Some dissertations are en-

tirely literature based. However, only the very best students can demonstrate analysis and synthesis and manage to structure existing literature in a way that has not been replicated elsewhere. Such a process requires a real engagement with complex concepts. Since students are required to demonstrate analysis and synthesis in a dissertation, the collection of a limited but original data set provides a basis for this activity. They will be required to analyse and summarise the data that they collect, and then to explore whether the data that they have collected confirms or contradicts the outcomes of research conducted by others. In addition, contact with the outside world, through interviews, case studies and other means, encourages students to look critically at the world around them, and may help them to develop some confidence in other skills such as interview techniques and telephone communication.

8. Put clear limits on what is feasible for an undergraduate with a range of other pressures on their time. For example, a student may feel that the distribution of 300 x 4 page questionnaires, takes little more effort than the distribution of 20 such questionnaires. They will discover however, when they come to data analysis, that they have set themselves a mammoth task. Similarly, the chosen topic needs to be one in which it is realistic for the student to become adequately acquainted with the concepts in the literature. In addition, the student needs to be able to perform an acceptable literature review using the resources available in print or electronically from their home institution. Inter-library loans and visits to other libraries may provide additional sources of information, but these are no substitute for an adequate local collection.

9. Support students in working through issues associated with access to organisations and individuals in the data collection process. Encourage them to form realistic expectations with regards to access, encourage them to use friends and relatives, and advise on ways of approaching individuals and organisations. In particular, if initial attempts to get access prove unsuccessful, the supervisor has a major role in re-shaping the approach to the dissertation so that the student is still able to complete a piece of work that adequately reflects their ability.

10. Expect that students will have difficulty with the literature review. First and foremost, students have difficulty understanding the difference between literature that describes other work already conducted in their field, and 'data sources', possibly printed or electronic which they may use to gather information relevant to their research question. Additionally, students nearly always have difficulty with:

- Understanding what a literature review is and its purpose;
- Using the right search terms in electronic databases, and developing

search strategies to narrow or broaden searches after initial attempts; this derives in part from their limited acquaintance with the concept framework in a subject - they are still learning;

- Understanding the difference between professional journal articles, and academic articles; this is particularly difficult for students when they are working with journal articles in electronic format, where other clues to the nature of the journal that might be evident in the print format have been removed;
- Understanding how to structure their literature review.

Be prepared to support them in all of these areas.

11. Help students to structure their dissertation. They need to confirm with the supervisor the chapters to be included, and the structure within chapters. If necessary draft out provisional structures for chapters, but always emphasise that this is their work, and they must take your suggestions away and test them to see if they work.

12. Help students to understand what their data tells them. Students often work quite well with detailed analysis, although some may need assistance with quantitative analysis, but summarising and drawing conclusions is much more challenging. Students are likely to be particularly reluctant to draw conclusions that contradict the work of others. For example, a recent student was investigating whether and in what ways the role of shop stewards had changed. Broadly, the literature says that it has changed; her interviews suggest that the picture is more complex and that the role has become much more dependent upon organisational context, and that therefore it may have changed more in some organisations than others. The student found it difficult to draw this conclusion herself, because she was looking for an answer that said the role either had or hadn't changed. Students also need assistance when the outcome of their work is inconclusive, and are inclined to think that their work is unsuccessful. They need encouragement to turn this outcome into a conclusion which explains why the work might be inconclusive and to make proposals for subsequent areas of work.

13. Finally, note the two weeks before dissertations are due in your diary, and plan as far as possible to be available and contactable during this period. If this period includes, as it often may, the Easter break, give students who are likely to have particular difficulty during this time full information as to your availability and how you can be contacted (eg. e-mail, post). Also, make it clear when the supervision process has finished and the student is expected to complete and submit the work without any further support.

Reviews

Books

On Becoming an Innovative University Teacher - Reflection in Action

John Cowan

The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press (1998)
ISBN 0 335199 93 3 (pbk)
0 335199 94 1 (hbk)

This book, written by a well-respected educator, gives a personal view (backed up by reference to other workers) on how reflection can improve the learning experience for students, and the teaching abilities of staff.

Numerous examples on how, why and where reflection can be implemented are given, the majority taken from the author's own wide-ranging experience. Reference is also made to learning and counselling theories to justify the practices outlined.

There are a lot of good ideas in this book eg. the idea that 'teaching' is about deliberately creating an environment in which students can learn, distinguishes 'education as a process, from other situations in which learning occurs'. There are also many practical hints eg. encouraging students to reflect by asking them the difference between doing something adequately and doing it well.

Cowan undoubtedly believes that reflection is at the heart of effective teaching and learning but accepts that initiating reflective teaching and learning is difficult in the face of conventional educational practice. He notes, 'Machiavelli has much to offer those who engage in educational innovation'. Sadly he does not give much more away in terms of how to convince or coerce 'the establishment' to support educational change - presumably on the grounds that giving away such 'secrets' would make it harder for him to do. A pity really, I'd like to know!

There were inevitably a few elements within this book that I disagreed with, but remarkably few given the range and scope of this work. My main dislike of the book was the Socratic dialogue in which it was written (I didn't know this was what the style was called until I'd read the book!). This involved the author, at the beginning of each chapter, writing a letter to himself as though from an interested reader who was asking questions of the author; the chapter then proceeded to answer these questions in a mostly conversational, first person, style. I found this format a little contrived and, for some reason, patronising.

Nonetheless, there is much reason to recommend this text. The sort of university

teacher who would be interested enough to purchase this book would probably gain quite a lot from it; if nothing else, moral support from the author. However, the sort of university teacher who would potentially gain most from it probably, and unfortunately, won't read it!

Graham Clarke
University of Wales, Bangor

Improving Education: Realist Approaches to Method and Research

Edited by Joanna Swann and John Pratt

Cassell (1999) £18.99 pbk
ISBN 0 304705 54 3

In the current educational climate, any publication with the words 'Improving Education' in the title will surely attract attention. This book achieves this, but in this case readers should be cautious about the relationship between title and content.

In a four-part approach several writers apply, defend and demonstrate acclaimed benefits of utilising Karl Popper's philosophies to improve educational research. This idea centres on discovering and eliminating errors and inadequacies in theories and expectations through critical dialogue. The writers identify the current context for improvement, that is, responding to wider criticism of educational research. Five descriptions of the underlying principles are then presented as 'a foundation for eight case studies.

However, in the process, while a reasonably developmental case was presented, I thought that at times the message was obscured. I suggest that, in their enthusiasm, the advocates condense too much into a short volume. To one seeking the clear guidelines suggested by the title, the chapters at times are heavy reading.

The book did offer an interesting perspective and certainly identified areas for research improvement, though at times I could not clearly see the link specifically to Popper. In fact, a number of points made are common in similar research texts. At the same time, some of the arguments are worth reflecting on if one is serious about improving research methodology and outcomes.

As a specific text on research methodology I don't think the book would enjoy wide appeal, and I would hesitate to recommend it highly. However, for those sensitive to the current debate, it would be worth a browse to reflect on some of the insights offered. For those seriously considering the Popperian approach, I think further reading would be necessary in order to fully grasp the inherent philosophies and their application to a research project. Here the adequate reference listing would be very helpful.

Overall, 'Improving Education' is a reasonable text that offers a response to a contemporary issue together with some ideas that will stimulate debate among re-

searchers. If this is achieved, then an improvement in educational research is possible.

Allan Doring
Australian Catholic University

Student Assessment in Higher Education: A Handbook for Assessing Performance

Allen H Miller, Bradford Imrie and Kevin Cox

Kogan Page (1998) £19.99
ISBN 0 749427 979 3

Assessment Matters in Higher Education: Choosing and Using Diverse Approaches

Sally Brown and Angela Glasner
Open University Press (1999) £22.50
ISBN 0 335202 42 X

It seems that there can never be too much literature on the broad topic of assessment of student learning. When two books for review land on the desk at the same time, one's immediate thought is: there is bound to be a degree of overlap. Not so with the above additions to my ever-increasing library on assessment.

Student Assessment in Higher Education probably rates as one of the best books I have read so far which I feel I could recommend to staff on induction courses or accredited courses on teaching, learning and assessment in higher education. That is not to say that the book is not suitable for a far wider target audience; what stands out about it is its accessibility. When some staff are given recommended reading lists they may 'whinge' along the lines of 'I want someone to tell me how to do it'. This book is honest, pragmatic and full of ideas which can be adapted to a host of different disciplines and learning situations.

Three key sections deal with the place of assessment in higher education, assessment methods and examining assessment. The first section reminds the reader of the purposes of higher education. This may seem unnecessary, but discussions with many colleagues suggest to me that too many academics still behave as if mass higher education was something for others to think about and had no relevance to teaching and assessment methods. This section goes on to explore the functions of assessment and the problems which can arise when formative assessment is used for summative purposes. Other chapters explore cognitive and non-cognitive educational objectives and the difficulties which can occur in fully and fairly assessing learning outcomes.

Practitioners will value in particular the main section of the book, which deals with different methods of assessment. This covers the timing of assessment tasks, assessment of essays, theses, objective tests, group projects, practical skills and fieldwork and final examinations. I like to believe that I have amassed a wealth of experience as regards assessment and I

still found this book to be refreshing, thorough, informative, and full of ideas I can adapt to my own situation.

The final section, on examining assessment, should be compulsory reading for any staff member involved in assessment of student learning. The academic community is still rather blasé about the importance of valid, reliable and manageable assessment strategies and tends still to bolt on assessment after a course has been designed, rather than consider it as an integral aspect of teaching and learning.

Assessment Matters in Higher Education is a different type of book with a more political feel about it. The first section deals with systems approaches to assessment and there is much scope for argument here. While the book is clearly aimed at a wide readership, there is room for caution when issues of high relevance in the USA are presented as if they were universally relevant in higher education systems. Also, although Angela Glasner's chapter on Innovations in Student Assessment: A System Wide Perspective, is very interesting, it was not absolutely clear what the take-home message is. Innovative assessment is not necessarily good assessment; much depends on the implementation of any assessment procedure and students having a clear understanding of the assessment parameters. This chapter might have sat more easily if placed next to Liz McDowell and Kay Sambell's excellent work on student perspectives on innovation.

The section devoted to assessing practice is highly commendable. Some very difficult issues are tackled such as assessment of key skills, group based assessment, oral assessments and the use of portfolios. As higher education places more and more emphasis on continuous professional development, it is likely that staff experience of portfolios will have a major influence on how we approach the use of portfolios in our classes. However, we must be careful not to lose sight of the many models available for assessment using portfolios. Gill Young's chapter on Using Portfolios for Assessment in Teacher Preparation and Health Sciences is an excellent contribution.

The final section of the book concentrates on self and peer assessment, emphasising the development of the autonomous independent learner. What is particularly attractive about this section is that it is not the usual suspects writing about the definitive experience of self and peer assessment! There are excellent case studies outlining first experiences of implementing peer and self assessment strategies as well as expert, political viewpoints about the importance of moving towards autonomous assessment procedures. These case studies should prove to be very popular aspects of this book because, for all that peer and self assessment are no longer considered as great innovations, it is remarkable how infrequently such procedures are used.

Overall this is a valuable addition to assessment literature, although it is difficult to pinpoint the target audience for Assessment Matters in Higher Education because of the breadth of material it covers. However, from my point of view, anyone who is involved in assessment of student learning, at whatever level, would be doing themselves a great favour with a good browse through both of these books.

Lorraine Stefani
University of Strathclyde

NOTICE TO PUBLISHERS

Books for review should be sent to:

Lesley MacDonald
Book Reviews Editor
Educational Developments
University of Durham
School of Education
Leazes Road
Durham DH1 1TA

Virtual Learning Environments

Dr Stephen Bostock FSEDA
Department of Computer Science
University of Keele

In *The Network Nation* (1978, 191-197), Hiltz and Turoff described the uses of networked computer communications as a way of widening educational access and supporting life-long learning. After twenty years of further experimentation we are seeing a consolidation and packaging of the software needed to support education, as Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs). VLEs support all or most of the activities of a course, for students and staff. Their number is growing, so recent reviews are valuable to teachers and institutions considering their use. Let's firstly consider the elements of VLEs. All of these can be provided separately and VLEs provide them in different combinations.

- Computer Mediated Communications (CMC) includes e-mail and shared message systems to support private shared messaging - bulletin boards or 'computer conferences'. These structure messages to reflect the content and also allow searching. Some support real-time messages between users who are online, either private or group ('MUDs' and MOOs).
- Publishing. Online documents of various types are needed by students: course management information like

schedules and learning objectives, and course content that might include multimedia resources and interactive tutorials. The Web is the format used by most VLEs, with the advantage that existing local or global resources can easily be linked.

- Using the Web is also important for the user interface. It is so familiar that VLEs within an HE environment must provide access via a browser. This constrains the design and functionality of the user interface compared to the specialist client software but reduces the initial effort of learning a system, and simplifies client software installation.
- Many VLEs offer computer-assisted assessment (CAA). Traditional instructional software usually had some element of objective testing, as multiple choice questions (MCQs), and their popularity has grown through the 1990s, as evidenced by the work of the CAA Centre (<http://caacentre.ac.uk/>).
- A final element we would expect to find is course management, controlling access, group composition, student work submission procedures and so on.

Now let's look at some reviews available on the Web.

1. Online Teaching: Tools & Projects by Stuart D. Lee, Susan Armitage, Paul Groves, and Chris Stephens 1999 <http://info.ox.ac.uk/jtap/reports/teaching/>.

This is educational rather than technical. Rejecting a 'utopian' view of completely computer-based education, they propose that technology should be used to supplement teaching not replace it, or make it more widely accessible, to improve teaching quality. It can be introduced in appropriate stages, not neglecting the simpler technologies like computer-mediated communication. They recommend a constructivist approach to teaching with the Internet, related to two ideas: learning as guided discovery and resource-based learning. They suggest different degrees of use of online tools depending on the teaching goals of the course and the technological capability of the host institution. VLEs are at the heavy end of this spectrum, combining many tools.

2. The TALENT Web site (Teaching And LEarning with Network Technologies) <http://www.le.ac.uk/TALENT/tools.html>

TALENT offers institutions organisational, educational, and technical support for, and strategies to implement, effective network technologies on the Web for teaching and learning. Much of the TALENT site concerns institutional change and support for learning technology but it includes some support for teachers. The list of Web tools includes 17 VLEs (this is not a complete list!) but it does not evaluate them. It points out that one of the main problems with VLEs at present is the lack of compat-

ibility between systems; materials produced and managed in one system are not easily transferred to or read by another.

3. Coventry Educational Development Unit <http://h1a-2.coventry.ac.uk:80/learning/environments/archive.htm>

This describes 10 VLEs and Web editors but does not compare them.

4. Glasgow Teaching and Learning

Service <http://www.gla.ac.uk/Otherdepts/TLS/Erica/Software.html>

Erica McAteer's list of evaluations of Web software concentrates on CMC, including Features for WBL systems (<http://www.gla.ac.uk/Otherdepts/TLS/Erica/G2criteria.html>) which gives criteria for conferencing systems and a Review of WBL systems (<http://www.gla.ac.uk/Otherdepts/TLS/Erica/G2review.html>) which reviews 5 VLEs.

5. FOCUS <http://www.focus.ac.uk/focus/index.htm>

The FOCUS site is developing a database of Web educational tools, which in future may be invaluable if it is maintained, but at present it has little content.

6. A Framework for Pedagogical Evaluation of Virtual Learning Environments by Sandy Britain and Oleg Liber <http://www.jtap.ac.uk/reports/html/jtap-041.html>

This is a JTAP report from the Bangor University Centre for Learning Technology. As a systematic review of VLE's, as opposed to less integrated tools, this is a heavyweight. It tries three different sets of evaluation criteria. The first, based on Laurillard's (1993) Conversational Framework model of learning, uses 6 criteria of supporting educational actions. They are not very successful and the most interesting idea is one single discriminator mentioned in passing (section 2.5) - the extent to which a VLE is designed for 'delivery' rather than to be truly 'interactive' - in other words, how much support there is for student input and control. Their second set of criteria is based on Laurillard's classification of media: discursive, adaptable, interactive and reflective. This is more useful, in that it draws out differences relevant to the emphases of the courses: delivery,

shared content or collaboration. However, the validity of this classification has been criticised (Bostock 1996). Neither set deals well with course management, for which a third model is used.

In conclusion, one is left with the feeling that developing evaluation criteria for VLEs is an almost impossible task, equivalent to criteria for evaluating the whole collection of media and activities for any non-virtual course. The important criterion is the support they give for the educational activities and interactions that are planned. Just as educational software designs can be crudely ranged from objectivist to constructivist (Boyle 1997, Phillips 1997), VLEs could be arranged in a similar order. While any VLE can be bent to the will of the teacher to a degree, they naturally fit a spectrum of styles of using online media from the narrowly instructional to those supporting more active learning (Tait 1997, Bostock 1997).

Traditional VLEs (such as Learning Space, WebCT, TopClass Virtual University, Courseinfo from Blackboard, Web Course in a Box) have many features for tutors and students. Basically they have a 'structural' approach to courses as content, generally with asynchronous discussion and student activity tracking, and sometimes with MCQs. Some VLEs like CoMentor and Firstclass primarily support synchronous and asynchronous discussions and so may allow student control depending on how they are used. At the other end of the spectrum, CoSE is explicitly designed to support active, constructivist learning approaches, but does not include CMC, assuming that a Web based

conferencing system will be patched in. Learning Landscapes is also designed to support resource-based learning.

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Links to VLE home sites are listed in the reviews and on my Web Based Learning page:

http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/cs/Stephen_Bostock/wbi.html#technologies

Reviews of Educational Media

should be sent to:

Dr Stephen Bostock FSEDA
Department of Computer Science
Keele University
Staffs ST5 5BG

s.j.bostock@cs.keele.ac.uk

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Innovations in Teaching English and Textual Studies

S Avery, C Bryan and Gina Wisker Eds

This latest SEDA paper in the *Innovations in ...* series brings together twenty original articles which explore a wide range of innovative approaches to the teaching, learning and assessment of English in Higher Education today both the UK and other countries.

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Dear Vice-Chancellor

May I be one of the first to congratulate you on your recent appointment to the University of Mercia. Many of us have so many fond memories of our time at the Mercia Mechanicals Institute, mercifully short though it may well have been.

Your governors seem to regard you as the academic equivalent of Big Ron, come to save them from relegation. As you yourself said, when you move to a university 42 places lower in The Times league table, there is only one way to go!

In order to help you in your quest for advancement in the university league tables, may I offer you the following advice.

1. Open a medical school. There is a significant correlation between The Times score and the proportion of students studying medicine (0.54). Although you are rightly proud of winning the nurse training contract in the face of stiff competition, I am afraid that nurses, charming as they undoubtedly are, will have to go. There is a significant inverse correlation between proportion of students in subjects allied to medicine and The Times score (-0.35).

2. Other subjects to promote are mathematics (0.64 correlation with The Times score), physical sciences (0.49), humanities (0.39), biology (0.36), and languages (0.48). However, the wisdom of continuing with your pioneering degree in Klingon must be open to question.

3. I am afraid that business (-0.66 correlation with The Times score), computing (-0.61), creative arts (-0.45) and built environment subjects (-0.38) will also have to close.

You could franchise these courses out and so keep the income whilst avoiding them contributing to The Times score. The town planners will no doubt respond positively to your initiative with Pyongyang University, where they can expect to find kindred spirits. The builders can take their cleavages back to the local technical colleges from whence they came. The surveyors will be no loss -they are always away on consultancy.

4. There is no need to worry about the loss of income from industry that these closures would cause as only research income makes a significant contribution to The Times score (0.89). In any case, it is much better for your graduates to go on to study for a higher degree (0.79 correlation) than to go directly into employment (-0.26).

5. The split PhD programmes in microbiology with Libya and military political science in Indonesia are potential winners. The Times score is highly correlated with percentages of overseas students (0.61) and research students (0.92).

6. Commissioning a famous architect to build a new library and sports centre should help boost expenditure in these areas as well as securing publicity. It is best to choose one who favours radical designs and the use of innovative materials so that expenditure on repairs and maintenance can be boosted in future years.

Finally, if I might draw your attention to my availability for your post of Pro Vice-Chancellor (International Relations). It has always been my ambition to travel the world and help people.

Your most obsequious servant
Dr Squeers

This letter was forwarded to *Educational Developments* by
Richard and Elizabeth Grover, School of Real Estate Management
Oxford Brookes University, Gipsy Lane Campus, Headington, Oxford OX3 0BP

Information for Contributors

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

The 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 publications 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.

SEDA Small Grants

Towards a Scholarship of Educational Development



Throughout the nineties educational developers came increasingly to prominence on the UK higher education scene. However our practice and role often remain unclear to other groups in higher education, and though we are eclectic in the way we draw on various research literatures to support our practice, the literature on educational development specifically remains at a tentative stage. There is a need to submit our own practice to the same rigorous scrutiny and research as that which is applied to the practice of many other professional groups - to problematise it, perhaps, to a greater extent.

Albeit on a small scale, it is the wish of SEDA to foster such scrutiny and to assist colleagues in the production of scholarly work which has educational development as its object of study. As on previous occasions SEDA invites proposals for small grants to support the costs of development-related research activity. The theme of this round of SEDA small grants will therefore be 'The scholarship of educational development and its application'.

Colleagues wishing to apply for support should interpret this theme broadly. The focus might be, for example, on conceptual frameworks and theoretical underpinnings of educational development; developers as a community of practice within higher education; the strategic role of developers; the management of educational development; educational development and change processes; the institutional locus of educational development; educational development and its relationship to the disciplines; the training and recruitment of educational developers; reviews of educational development literature; or development and technology. However this range should in no way be considered as exhaustive and the adjudication panel will give serious consideration to any systematic proposal for the study of educational development practice. Work undertaken should reflect a degree of scholarly rigour. Where projects are more development oriented than research oriented such rigour will be expected in the processes of evaluation.

In order to be eligible for a SEDA small grant applicants should be an individual or associate SEDA member for the year 2000, or a member of staff in an institution which holds institutional SEDA membership during 2000. Where joint bids are proposed, at least one applicant should have SEDA membership.

Six grants will be offered, each grant being a maximum of £500. Half of this sum will be paid on acknowledgement that a proposal has been successful, and the remainder on receipt of a final report and statement of expenditure.

There are no special forms of application. Proposals should be sent to SEDA Small Grants c/o the SEDA Office (address below) and should include an account, in no more than 500 words, of the following:

- 1 the project
- 2 what will be achieved by the project
- 3 how it will be carried out
- 4 who will carry it out
- 5 when the project will be begun and by when it will be completed
- 6 how much support is sought and an indication of how the money will be used
- 7 how the project results will be evaluated, reported on and disseminated.

Successful applicants will be expected to present a paper at a SEDA Conference, and submit a 200-word piece for Educational Developments.

It will not be possible to enter into correspondence with applicants. Each proposal will be judged by a minimum of three assessors, two of whom will be drawn from SEDA Executive, with the remainder either from SEDA Executive or other experts with SEDA membership.

The criteria will be as follows:

- a) What will be achieved by the project? Is it achievable as proposed? Will achievement be worthwhile to enough people - not just to the applicant or their institution?

- b) How will the project be carried out? Is the method appropriate to the project?
- c) Who will carry it out? Do the assessors have confidence in the proposers' ability to undertake the project?
- d) When will the project be begun and by when will it be completed? Strong preference will be given to projects which will be undertaken and reported before summer 2001.
- e) How much support is sought and how will the money be used? Are these reasonable? All else being equal, preference will be given to projects which also attract support from other sources.
- f) How will the project results be evaluated, reported on and disseminated? Are these methods likely to reach and to influence the intended audience?

As in previous rounds of SEDA small grants judging will be on a 4-point scale, from poor to excellent.

The timetable for the consideration of applications will be as follows:

- Proposals must be received by the SEDA Office by 31st May 2000.
- Judging will take place over the following 3 weeks (by 21st June 2000).
- All applicants notified of the results by 28th June 2000.
- Successful applicants will be expected to present their findings at a SEDA event during 2001.

For further information concerning SEDA Small Grant applications please contact Ray Land by e-mail at ray.land@ed.ac.uk

SEDA Ltd

Selly Wick House, 59 / 61 Selly Wick Road
Selly Park, Birmingham B29 7JE

Tel: 0121 415 6801; Fax: 0121 415 6802

E-mail: office@seda.demon.co.uk URL: www.seda.demon.co.uk