Educational Developments

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The Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN): the implications for educational developers

Cliff Allan, LTSN Programme Director

Introduction

This article describes the background to and nature of the new Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) and considers the interaction between the network and educational developers in the light of overlapping and common interests.

Background

The arrival of the LTSN on the HE scene represents both an evolutionary step forward in terms of developing existing subject-based activity concerned with disseminating aspects of good teaching practice and innovation, and a new attempt to provide a means for bringing some coherence and co-ordination to the wide variety of disparately located and sourced developments in learning, teaching and assessment in HE.

The LTSN has been established within a strategic context of increased emphasis on the importance of learning and teaching reflected, for example, through the establishment of the Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT) and increased Funding Council support for activity concerned with the enhancement and improvement of learning and teaching (ie. the HEFCE's Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund).

Although the funding councils have a history of supporting development and enhancement activity the desire to redefine their funding strategies in this area provided an opportunity to reform the purpose and nature of their support. Following consultation with the sector 3 key strategic issues emerged:

a. The need to recognise that a great deal of good practice and innovation in learning, teaching and assessment already existed in the sector and that greater effort and support was required to promote and transfer this more widely.

b. Recognition that there is a substantial subject-specific element in most issues relating to learning, teaching and assessment, and the fact that academic staff tend to think about such issues predominantly in terms of their own discipline. Therefore, dissemination and transfer efforts may be most effective at the subject level.

c. The need to rationalise the number and disparate nature of separate and sometimes overlapping national initiatives by creating greater coherence and co-ordination between funders and programmes.

Continued overleaf ...

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Therefore, the need for a subject-based structure focusing on the promotion and transfer of good practice and innovation in learning and teaching, which could also provide a means for co-ordinating and brokering the wide range of other related development activities, emerged.

This corresponded with the separate sector-wide consultation on the review report of the Computers in Teaching Initiative (CTI) and the Teaching and Learning Technology Support Network (TLTSN), two funding council initiatives set up to support the development and application of communication and information technologies in learning and teaching. The review recommended that the funding councils establish a subject-based support network for learning and teaching to succeed the CTI and TLTSNs, with a broad focus across all learning and teaching activity. It also recommended the establishment of a generic learning and teaching centre to provide support for all aspects of learning and teaching that are common to many or all subject disciplines.

These two drivers resulted in the creation of the LTSN in January 2000 comprising three elements:

a. 24 subject centres - following a tendering process 24 LTSN Subject Centres, each located within one or more HE isntitutions, were approved for support for an initial period of 5 years. The Centres cover the 42 standard subject units as defined by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

b. The Generic Learning and Teaching Centre - to be co-located with the ILT in York.

c. A LTSN Programme Executive responsible for the direction and management of the LTSN - contracted to the ILT in York and accountable to the funding councils.

Purpose and functions of the LTSN

The main aim of the LTSN is to promote high quality learning and teaching in all subject disciplines, and through the GLTC to all institutions. The principal functions of the LTSN will be:

- The creation and facilitation of networks concerned with learning and teaching practice.
- The promotion and transfer of good practices in learning, teaching and assessment.
- Brokering knowledge, information and expertise on learning, teaching and assessment practices.

The roles of both LTSN subject centres and the GLTC can be summarised as follows.

The core activities of each subject centre will include:

- collation of information on all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment
- provision of training opportunities
- advisory service to practitioners
- practitioner support through maintenance of networks and effective contacts
- liaison with relevant professional bodies and subject associations
- advice on the implementation of C&IT in learning and teaching
- ensuring that all practitioners are aware of current and future pedagogic developments, including developments in the use of C&IT
- collaboration with cognate subject centres to support interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary activity
- collaboration with the Generic Teaching & Learning Centre to ensure that subject centre staff are aware of broader pedagogic and technological issues.

The GLTC will:

- provide strategic advice to the sector on generic learning and teaching issues
- disseminate good practice in the development and deployment of new methods and new technologies
- act as a knowledge broker for innovation in learning and teaching.
- develop and maintain a major portal for on-line learning and teaching resources, case studies, examples of good practices and evaluated methods and packages.

The core activities of the GLTC will include:

- collating information on generic developments in teaching, learning and assessment
- advising and supporting subject centres and HEIs on generic teaching, learning and assessment issues, including the use of new technologies
- maintaining an international outlook on generic learning and teaching developments
- liaison with institutional learning and teaching staff development activity
- liaison with the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Pedagogic Research Initiative and other organisations managing research and development projects in learning and teaching
- making available critical evaluations of generic learning and teaching-related C&IT materials.

Interactions with Educational Developers

The LTSN is about co-ordinating effort and collaboration at the discipline, subject, multi-disciplinary and national levels. For the LTSN subject centres, and the GLTC on the national level, to become key sources of information on good practices, catalysts for change and brokers of knowledge on teaching, learning and assessment in HE they will need to work closely with subject-based networks, educational developers, staff developers, agents of change, development projects and institutional managers.

The LTSN will therefore be collaborative in outlook and in method of working. Educational developers will become major collaborators through multi-dimensional relationships, for example:

At the LTSN Subject Centre level:

- Subject Centres are being encouraged to include an experienced educational developer on their steering groups to contribute to the strategic development of the centre's services
- Educational Development Units in HE institutions could encourage faculties / departments and schools to establish key contacts with their appropriate LTSN Subject Centre and help co-ordinate such contacts at the institutional level to maximise the input from LTSN subject centres to the institution.
- Such units could also advise LTSN subject centres on institutional L&T policies and departmental approaches.
- Educational developers could provide knowledge of, and expertise in, subject-specific good practices and innovations which could be promoted and transferred more widely by the LTSN subject centres.

At the generic level:

- The GLTC Advisory Group will include educational developers.
- GLTC professional staff may have an educational development background and therefore be already networked with the community.
- Educational developers will form a key network for the GLTC to work with in terms of gathering information on good practices, identifying key national development themes and in joining project groups to further key national development themes.

- Educational developers could provide important advice on, and means for, the effective transfer of practices and innovations promoted by the GLTC.
- Educational developers can help strengthen cross-disciplinary approaches.

At the national LTSN level:

- The LTSN Executive will maintain links with educational developer networks to ensure co-ordination of effort.
- Educational developers could act as 'critical friends' in the formative evaluation of the LTSN.
- Educational developers could contribute to LTSN discussion and development of issues such as 'what is good practice?', 'how to transfer and embed innovation'.

These are possible ways to ensure interaction to ensure that the common interests of the LTSN and educational developers are bound together and co-ordinated. The landscape of support for learning and teaching is changing and artificial barriers between different segments of interest must be avoided. The different elements of the LTSN have been established and invested in by the funding councils to provide a focus and means for raising the profile of learning and teaching at the subject and national levels. Educational developers and the LTSN must combine their expertise, experience and networks to maximise the present favourable national and institutional policy context to jointly deliver this shared objective.

Editorial

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to support good teaching is rising up the agenda both nationally and in our institutions. The theme figures prominently in this issue of Educational Developments because of SEDA's role in helping to bring about improvements in student learning.

We have brought together a number of pieces which show the work in progress on CPD. We have reports of two recent meetings on this topic (Heads of Educational Development and our SEDA London & South-East group); an account of the development of Learning Advisers at Manchester University, which shows the flexibility and usefulness of SEDA's scheme for Professional Accreditation in Higher Education; the outcome of research into SEDA members' own CPD requirements; and an important contribution in which Helen Beetham has drawn on her experience of the EFFECTs project at Plymouth to shape the questions and themes of this major issue. Meeting the agenda for our colleagues will require SEDA members to reflect on and develop their own practice, and Ray Land's article on orientations to educational development will contribute to this process.

While the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme will be keeping many of us occupied for the next few weeks (details on www.ilt.ac.uk/public/news.html), the UK is not the first to try such approaches. The Canadian experience can be found at www.umanitoba.ca/academic_support/uts/stlhe/index.html. We would welcome responses to these national developments, and we print in this issue Colin Evans' reactions to the ILT's emphasis on excellence.

At local level, many of us will be working with colleagues who are making applications to the ILT through the direct route. Good and enthusiastic teachers are now setting down, perhaps for the first time, why and how they have developed in the way they have. The professionalism of instinctive self-evaluation, judgement and change is being expressed in the language of the reflective practitioner. If this succeeds as a developmental process in its own right, can research into practice and the "dual professional" be far behind? This is a good time to share your experience in this area.

At the institutional level we must surely be looking for approaches which are both various and appropriate. We are delighted that Cliff Allen has set out the LTSN's agenda for us, and it is good news that the ILT will be taking the CPD discussion thoroughly and with extensive consultation. Much will depend on how positively PVCs, Heads of Schools, Chairs of Teaching Committees and others respond to the challenges of HEFCE's Learning and Teaching Strategy. In the light of the emerging subject centres it is perhaps surprising that little has yet been heard of Department-based approaches to pedagogic CPD - another area on which we would be pleased to receive contributions.

We learnt from that stumble during the creation of the current ILT scheme just how dangerous was the pro-forma, box-ticking approach to the creation of a genuinely developmental culture. SEDA has a lot to gain from, and give to, the next stage of this public debate.

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An Alternative Perspective on CPD

Helen Beetham
Development Officer, University of Plymouth

What's the point of CPD?

It seems likely, in the short term at least, that ILT requirements will be designed to ensure that all staff can demonstrate a threshold level of CPD activity. The primary aim is to establish a professional body with broad membership and support, whose standards are acceptable to individual members and are not too onerous for institutions to assess. It can only be good news for student learning if individual members of staff are reflecting on and developing their practice to remain in good standing with their profession. While we work towards the short-term goals, however, we should not lose site of the underlying reasons why staff need professional development opportunities.

Learning and teaching in HE is emerging as a distinct profession at this moment in history for a variety of reasons, of which an important one is the need to respond collectively to change. The pressures for change are well known -massification, diversification, the information revolution, competition from other providers, employability, lower unit costs, a wide range of government agendas such as lifelong learning and public accountability (1). Unlike many other professional bodies, learning and teaching in HE will have no time to establish itself as a stable community of practice, working to recognised and well-established standards. Almost the only constant will be the need to change. CPD will therefore have to support staff not only in developing their own practice but in developing the collective practices of their profession. In business terms there is a need for 'learning organisations' and a 'learning culture' (2) as well as individuals who are committed to their own learning within the given organisations and cultures of HE.

For developers, the requirements for staff CPD are assumed to flow from the requirements of student learning. Translating the pressures for change into positive outcomes for student learning over the next five to ten years will require a range of new skills and approaches on the part of university staff. Collectively, they will probably need to:

- undertake more-or-less constant curriculum (re)design and development;
- keep informed about educational policy and pedagogical theory, and translate these into practice within their own local (institutional / disciplinary) context;
- develop a much wider repertoire of learning and teaching approaches (eg. distance learning, design of interactive resources, computer conferencing) and ways of working (eg. project teams, specialist contracts, hot-desking);
- secure resources, internally and externally, to support specific developments;
- work closely with other departments and specialist teams, and with other bodies within and beyond HE;
- continually review, monitor and evaluate pedagogical practices - their own, and those of their department / institution.

SEDA members can no doubt add more; it is no coincidence that many of these activities are currently carried out by educational developers.

We can be fairly sure that not all staff will adopt this developmental role to the same (or indeed any) degree. It is also true, though, that unless a substantial number begin to adopt it soon then the needs of students in the coming decade will not be met. Just as educational and academic development units have become more central to the life of institutions (3) -and for much the same reasons -the development agenda has become far too large for us to manage on our own. CPD which focuses only on individual development is a luxury we probably can't afford.

What's in it for staff?

If that is the educational development agenda, is there a professional development agenda which supports it? Put another way: why on earth would academic staff choose to develop *as developers* when much easier CPD options are certain to be on the menu?

Here I would like to draw on three recent exercises, carried out among staff and educational developers, to suggest some answers. The first took place during an evaluation workshop for the EFFECTS project in July 1999 (4). Developers who were involved in delivering new CPD programmes within the EFFECTS framework identified factors which had motivated staff to take part (5). These programmes ask staff to undertake a curriculum development project involving review, design, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of their outcomes. The second exercise was a survey of the SEDA and EFFECTS mailbase lists, carried out by the author during January 2000. This asked what would motivate academic staff to contribute case study materials to a national resource of learning and teaching innovations (6). While the question is fairly specific, it presumes underlying CPD activities focused on innovation and change. Finally, developers attending a SEDA workshop at the University of Central London in March 2000 brainstormed a list of factors motivating staff to undertake CPD (7). The results are summarised below:

(1) Factors referenced in all three exercises:
- Professional advancement / career progression
- Academic credit
- Additional funding for specific development projects
- Time off from other responsibilities to focus on development

(2) Factors referenced in two out of three:
- Student learning outcomes
- Personal satisfaction, including intellectual satisfaction
- General recognition and acknowledgement (eg. from colleagues)
- Publication opportunities

(3) Factors mentioned in the e-mail survey but not in the other exercises:
- Support, encouragement (eg. from educational developers)
- Simplicity / ease of documentation (ie. evidencing CPD should not represent a large additional investment of time)
- Networking / building a community of practice which values professional development
- Conditions of membership for ILT (but staff would need to see the benefits first!)

None of these surveys asked academic staff directly about their motivations, and this is important work which remains to be done. The larger number of factors mentioned in the email survey may simply be due to the greater amount of time for reflection afforded by this medium, and in the context of the other two exercises it may have been felt that the 'support and encouragement of educational developers' did not need to be explicitly spelled out!

A number of tentative conclusions can at least be drawn. Happily for developers (and other optimists) there appear to be several *intrinsic* motivations for CPD, among them personal intellectual satisfaction, the improvement of learning outcomes for students,

general recognition and the acknowledgement of colleagues. The desire for more time and resources to devote to development could also be taken as a sign of intrinsic commitment to this agenda, even if it reveals a culture of special pleading rather than mainstream activity. Surely CPD opportunities should be available which exploit these existing motivations to the full.

Unhappily, the extrinsic factors seem to predominate. Of these, career enhancement is in the hands of institutional decision makers and the national funders whose allocations of money send such clear messages about what kinds of staff activity are valued. However, there is every sign that the national agenda is becoming more favourable to staff who specialise in learning and teaching and its development, and SEDA members will continue to push for institutional initiatives which provide even greater career incentives such as teaching fellowship schemes and secondments. Developers now need to be inventive about the ways in which CPD schemes can be tied in with these tangible rewards. While the ILT will provide a crucial lever, it was noted during all three exercises that - at this point in time - the actual benefits of ILT membership remain to be proven to staff.

As far as allocation of resources goes, educational and academic developers are increasingly likely to have a voice within institutions. There seems little reason why funding for specific development projects should not be tied - loosely or firmly - to CPD, for example by weighting bids to institutional innovations funds, or by designing development opportunities specifically around the needs of funded projects.

Academic credit is an issue firmly in the educational developers' court, and the community now has considerable expertise in gaining institutional accreditation for programmes of professional development. Publication opportunities are also becoming more widely available, for example through SEDA and (hopefully) the new subject centre journals. Whether or not one approves of the publication mentality, it is the case that the more academically rigorous our CPD programmes, the more credibility attaches to research and development activity in the field of learning and teaching.

So what kind of CPD is needed?

Supporting staff in the transition to a more developmental role, and ensuring a good fit with their own professional development agendas, will not be straightforward. Developers too will have to adapt. The following suggestions are drawn from the experience of developing a CPD programme in Embedding Learning Technologies (ELT) for staff at the University of Plymouth. This work was done as part of the TLTP3 EFFECTS project, which provides a national framework for the development of similar programmes at other institutions (8). The programme is now validated at masters level and has 16 members of staff enrolled. Two other CPD modules (in embedding Key Graduate Attributes and Skills into the curriculum and in developing links with employers) have also been accredited as part of the same Integrated Masters Programme.

The modules at Plymouth and the EFFECTS programme as a whole are still undergoing evaluation, so it is too early to say whether they actually support staff effectively in adopting a more developmental role. However, there are a number of features of these programmes which make them particularly well adapted to meet the needs outlined above.

Informed by developmental values

SEDA has always insisted that the values underpinning good practice should be made an explicit feature of the development process. As CPD becomes a mass activity, the more readily measured outcomes are bound to be emphasised over those aspects of process which are difficult to evidence and assess. For change agents, however, values are not an 'optional extra' but an essential piece of kit -who would set off into unknown territory without a reliable compass? The modules at Plymouth ask participants to focus explicitly on their values and beliefs in undertaking curriculum development, and all EFFECTS programmes use the SEDA values to give participants some constant points of reference, at a time when their actual practices may be undergoing radical change.

Specialised

Staff will need such a wide range of collective skills in future that it seems probable that individual roles will continue to diversify. The CPD programmes which support staff will therefore not be one-size-fits-all. An advantage of staff choosing to specialise in, say, key graduate attributes and skills, transition to HE or the use of learning technologies, is that professional development acquires some of the status of subject specialism. The *scholarship of teaching* (9) becomes more meaningful when staff have voluntarily chosen to pursue a branch of that field that is of personal relevance and interest.

Focused on innovation

Specialised programmes like ELT offer a framework within which innovators, mavericks and enthusiasts can be supported, above and beyond the requirements of competence. Promoting innovation and diversity will be vital, not only to the sanity of educational developers (!) but to the long-term capacity of the HE sector to respond to change. To allow this, there need to be models of CPD which are loosely structured, open ended as to final outcomes, and individually negotiated with participants.

Based around real development issues

Increasing numbers of academic staff at Plymouth were already working on curriculum/learning development projects with the support of innovations funds. For individuals, we felt there were obvious advantages in tying professional development opportunities to work they were already undertaking and from which they - and their colleagues and students - expected to see tangible benefits. From the point of view of student learning, there are even greater advantages in ensuring that such developments are effectively supported and carried through. This connection also ensures that staff retain ownership of the processes and outcomes of their own CPD.

Working through action research

Action research would seem to be particularly relevant for professional development which is also aimed at learning and teaching innovation, as it *'is carried out by practitioners seeking to improve their understanding of events, situations and problems so as to increase the effectiveness of their practice'* (10). Our SEDA accredited course at Plymouth already required new lecturers to complete an action research project as part of their initial programme. We wanted to extend this approach to encompass a wider range of methodologies in educational research -adding to the intellectual challenges and rewards - but in a way which would also value the practical experience of longer-serving staff.

Academically accredited

As staff pursue learning issues in greater depth, and with greater scholarship and understanding, they may well expect academic as well as professional recognition for their efforts. We have accredited our CPD modules at masters level, as have all the other programmes so far developed within the EFFECTS framework. This adds to the incentive for staff, who may already have masters credits from completing initial SEDA- or ILT-recognised programmes. A focus on the (action) research element and an expectation that at least some participants will publish their outcomes also contributes to academic credibility. At Plymouth we already have one article and several conference papers accepted.

Collaborative

The ELT programme brings together members of staff with different roles in the embedding and support of learning technologies, helping to ensure effective collaboration. Nationally, we have adapted the EFFECTS framework so that individuals may provide

evidence that they have achieved a particular outcome collaboratively with others, rather than simply through their own efforts. At the same time our involvement in a national network enables us to collaborate as developers, sharing resources and best practice, and helping one another deal with issues such as accrediting our courses and integrating them effectively with our respective institutional agendas.

Critically independent ...

It is fashionable for developers in learning technology (and no doubt elsewhere) to follow Rogers' categorisation of staff into *'early'* and *'late'* adopters and rail against individuals' *'resistance to change'*. While there are certainly closed minds in academia, there are also reflective practitioners who oppose certain agendas because they fear a negative impact on student learning. In designing the Plymouth modules, my colleagues and I have been very clear about allowing opportunities to critique the underlying agendas from an informed perspective, as well as offering examples of 'best practice' in carrying those agendas through. There must surely be room for CPD which is not tied to appraisal or other institutional monitoring procedures, which allows for open, scholarly exploration and develops in a wide range of staff the *'conscience of teaching and learning'* (11).

... but institutionally embedded

In consulting on the EFFECTS framework we have been told repeatedly that we should not make institutional development the responsibility of individual staff. Surveys of systemic change in higher education (12) emphasise that it requires -in addition to staff with appropriate expertise -leadership commitment, a favourable departmental climate, good information and interpersonal networks, appropriate reward structures, and of course available resources. However, there are two ways in which a CPD framework can become a lever for change at institutional level. First, the development team supporting the framework may well have some central influence, through which they can advocate those institutional changes needed to support local innovation (top down). Second, the work of participants can be scaled up throughout the institution, given effective avenues of dissemination and large doses of political will (bottom up). Both of these processes help to keep institutional agendas in line with the real experience of staff in departments; both may be strengthened if the CPD pathway(s) concerned are explicitly cited in the institutional learning and teaching strategy, as we have worked to ensure at Plymouth.

Implications for SEDA

While the ILT focuses on those forms of CPD which can be *required* of staff, SEDA may wish to focus on the needs of those who are taking forward the learning development agenda. Between the professional competence expected of everyone and the learning and teaching fellowships for the starry few, there need to be credible reward structures for staff who choose to specialise in learning and teaching for some or all of their careers. These staff will need specialist support, integrated around the specific curriculum issues which concern them, their colleagues and students.

The question is how SEDA can help developers to offer these opportunities. The EFFECTS project - like the original SEDA teachers scheme - shows the value of shared frameworks for development. Developers in institutions can see the benefits: generic learning outcomes and values, guidelines for the development of their programmes, a common rationale, a network of practitioners with similar concerns and a body of supporting materials that have been proven in use. They are free to interpret these in whatever way meets the needs of their staff and students.

Other specialist groups exist - for example the subject centres - with an interest in developing frameworks and awards of their own. No doubt more will emerge as new agendas appear over the horizon. These groups have specific kinds of educational expertise, but they do not have experience in managing national schemes or in the core values and objectives that inform effective educational development. A body such as SEDA could give coherence to a wide range of new CPD initiatives, and help others to develop to meet the changing needs of staff and students. At the same time, the actual support structures offered at institutions need to be effective. Therefore there is an ongoing need to recognise and support developers working in institutions, affirm the value of what they do, and monitor the quality of the programmes they provide to staff.

SEDA is currently talking with EFFECTS and other organisations about future developments in accreditation. I hope this article has shown why a scheme is urgently needed to complement the agenda for universal standards of CPD which is being taken forward by the ILT.

Notes

1. An excellent overview of these pressures is given by Lueddeke, G (1998) UK Higher Education at a Crossroads: Reflections on issues and practice in teaching and learning, *IETI*, 35 (2)

2. See for example Senge, P (1990) **The fifth discipline: the art and practice of the learning organization**. New York: Doubleday; Otala, M (1995) The learning organization: theory and practice, *Industry in Higher Education*, **June**.

3. Gosling, D (1996) What do educational development units do? *International Journal for Academic Development* 1 (1); Lueddeke, G (1997), Educational Development Units in Higher Education: much ado about something? *Quality in Higher Education* 3 (2).

4. For more information about the EFFECTS project see http://sh.plym.ac.uk/eds/effects/

5. Five institutional programmes were represented (Plymouth, Southampton, UMIST, UNL and Oxford Brookes). Items are given in no particular order.

6. The survey was carried out by email during January 2000 to SEDA and TLTP EFFECTS mailbase lists and received 47 responses. Items are given in descending order of popularity.

7. 22 educational developers were present, including the workshop leaders James Wisdom (who facilitated this section) and Chris Rust. Items are given in no particular order.

8. I am grateful to all of my colleagues, and most particularly to Paul Bailey, for ongoing discussions over the last 15 months which have helped to clarify these ideas. They do not, however, represent the policy of the EFFECTS project or of the University of Plymouth.

9. Boyer, E (1991) **Scholarship Reconsidered: priorities of the professoriate**, Princeton: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

10. Kemmis, S and McTaggart, R (1988) **The Action Research Planner**, Deakin University Press. See also McKernan, J (1993) Teaching educational action research: a tale of three cities. *Educational Action Research* 2 (1).

11. Boud, D (1995) Meeting the challenges, in Brew, A (ed) **Directions in staff development**, SRHE / Open University Press.

12. Higher Education Quality Council (UK, 1994) **Choosing to Change**, London: HEQC; Wright, Q and O'Neil, C (1995) Teaching improvement practices: successful strategies for HE, in Wright and Associates (eds), **Teaching improvement practices: international perspectives**, Bolton: Anker Publishing. Both cited in Lueddeke, G (1997) Emerging learning environments in HE: Implications for institutional change and academic developers. *IJAD* 2(2).

Against Excellence

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The Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT) has as its slogan *Supporting excellence in learning and teaching*. I believe this is deeply misleading as a statement of its real mission. The Institute is in fact in favour not of *excellence* but of *high standards*.

It's not semantic quibbling: the pursuit of 'excellence' and the pursuit of high standards are profoundly different strategies. On the whole, in Britain, we have instinctively and for deep rooted historical and educational reasons gone for excellence, not high standards - a focus group would have to say that if Britain were a plane it would be a Concorde not a 747, a Rolls Royce not a Honda Accord.

When Tony Blair recently visited St Paul's community school in East London he wrote on the board as a parting message *'Only excellence will do'*. Logically this is absurd: he could as well have written *'All pupils must be above average'*. 'Excellence' means 'standing above the rest'. It implies competition - winners and losers. The basic assumption underlying this strategy is that excellence *redeems* (the religious reference is not fortuitous). Provided we can point to one example of something which is (or once was) 'the best in the world' we need not be too concerned about how everything else is working.

But I am not interested in whether my 747 pilot can loop the loop; I want him or her to take off and land unobtrusively every time on time and deal competently with emergencies. I want to be able to call *any* qualified plumber (not one who is brilliant and whose 'phone number is a closely guarded secret) and not have a flood the next day. I want to be able to go into *any* restaurant and get a good meal. I want standards. I want them to be high but above all I want them to be wide. The best can be the enemy of the good and, over a swathe of human activity, a swathe that certainly includes university teaching, good enough is good enough. I think the ILT believes this as well, but language is dangerous: choose the wrong word and the wrong policy follows. Choose right and you influence policy - the ILT was, after all, careful to put learning before teaching in its title although its not what trips off the tongue.

The search for excellence ends up emphasising conventional, archaic and romantically unreal criteria - speed in Concorde's case, ostentatious bulk in Rolls Royce's: in teaching it means charismatic lecturing or one-to-one tutorials. Or else you get a 'flagship' teaching room surrounded by a lot of grotty accommodation.

This is a very real dilemma for university teachers. Our life has been a sequence of individual competitions in which we have excelled. Each stage of the selection process had its winners and its losers and we were the ones who remained when the others were filtered out. We taught students who were themselves 'excellent'.

But in a hugely expensive mass higher education system it is no longer enough to produce an élite. The task is therefore not to refine the filtering process but to add value; and the nature of this added value needs to be made as explicit as possible.

In the early days of the ILT proposals, the DfEE proposed sending around video-tapes of excellent lecturers. Fortunately, this was one of the proposals to get a unanimous thumbs down from the sector. But many universities believe that by giving individuals 'excellent teacher' awards others will be encouraged to emulate and standards will rise.

My view is that this will have the effect of splitting off and tokenising good teaching. We project on to the star those aspects of ourselves which we should be owning and developing. The presence in an institution of one 'excellent' teacher is only significant if all the others have reached a high standard, and prizes won't achieve that. If anything there should be prizes for institutions which demonstrate that *all* their teachers have a high standard and indeed this is HEFCE's current strategy.

The way to improve teaching standards will be to get a working consensus on what the criteria are (what most of us can agree as being the appropriate behaviour of a university teacher), try to specify high minimum standards for those criteria and accredit and recognise individuals and institutions which attain them.

This is likely to produce more 'excellence'. It is *more* not less likely that those individuals who are competitive, challenging and perfectionist will innovate and be outstanding if the emphasis is on widespread high standards. You have to be very bright to shine in broad daylight; it is easier to be a beacon on a darkling plain. In a world of high standards, excellence, in the form of a star, the uncategorisable wonderful, will look after itself.

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Creative Pathways to Professional Development

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Context

The University of Manchester has been engaged in an initiative to introduce explicit frameworks, referred to locally as Personal and Academic Development Programmes (PADPs), to support students in assessing, planning, recording and reviewing their development to enable them to play a greater role in directing their own learning.

Our early experiences of PADPs at the University had shown that students were unwilling to engage in 'standalone' schemes. Local evaluation demonstrated that the processes underpinning PADPs - those of self-assessment, action planning, recording and reviewing - need to be 'part of the culture'. More extensive research of students' experiences of such schemes in schools (Rouncefield and Ward, 1998) echoed this. In a recent survey, undergraduate students who perceived their experience of recording achievement in schools as a valuable and useful one, described a process which was tutor-supported through a constructive dialogue.

We saw that academic staff must play a crucial role in incorporating elements of personal and academic development planning into the teaching and learning process. However, student support and guidance functions can be fragmented, spanning many different roles and responsibilities within academic departments. The activities associated with learner support are not easily quantified or defined and practice can be variable within departments.

A two year development grant from the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) in spring '98, under its 'Recording Achievement' development theme, provided a catalyst for this area of work. The strategic aim of this project was to embed PADPs at the heart of student learning through effective integration within degree programme structures and processes. Accordingly, the majority of the project budget has been aimed at supporting staff through the creation of new roles linked to learner support, development of enduring structures for dissemination and the introduction of opportunities for career development and recognition linked to student support and guidance.

A Strategy Underpinned by Staff Development

There have been three key strands to the staff development initiative:

i) Creation of 'Learning Adviser' roles in pilot departments. Funding was awarded to seven pilot departments where a 'Learning Adviser' was nominated to develop and implement a PADP scheme. In many departments, aspects of recording and reviewing exist already in parts of the curriculum (eg. a learning log to support the year abroad, a career management skills module, etc.) but often these elements have evolved in a piecemeal fashion and are not linked in a coherent way. 'Learning Advisers', who are members of academic staff in strategic roles, have been instrumental in developing schemes in seven pilot departments which build on existing practice and improve co-ordination and linkage in PADP practices in each year of the programme. 'Learning Advisers' feel the focus of their role has added value within their department as they have been able to draw together a number of student support processes to bring better co-ordination and impact.

ii) Establishing a staff secondment scheme to a central learner support service. The University's 'Central Academic Advisory Service (CAAS)' is a student centred service offering advice and guidance on academic matters to all students. CAAS has been host to a secondment scheme for academic staff who are keen to develop their expertise in the area of student support and guidance. Secondees are attached to CAAS for half a day each week for a semester. They experience the very varied range of student problems and issues presented to CAAS Advisers, providing a different and wider perspective on student development and support needs. This scheme is designed to equip participants with a thorough knowledge and understanding of issues relating to student support and guidance as a basis for developing PADP systems in their own disciplines.

iii) Creating an Enduring Structure for Dissemination through an Accredited CPD award in Student Support and Guidance. Thirdly, a significant part of the project budget was allocated to develop a continuing professional development (CPD) programme. This forms part of the strategy for continuation and embedding. We recognised the need for value to be attached to the roles performed by staff in introducing PADP schemes. Further it was clear that the models and methods developed by pilot departments were transferable but required some local adaptation. There needed to be a mechanism for transferring good practice and giving support and encouragement to 'champions' beyond the initial pilot departments.

Professional Development in Higher Education Award (PDHE): an enabling framework for CPD

The development strands of the project aligned closely with the objectives and outcomes, principles and values of the SEDA PDHE Award. This CPD programme would:

- Provide a model of CPD based on reflective practice (modelling the processes we were trying to introduce to students).
- Offer an inclusive approach in bringing together members of staff with different roles associated with supporting students' personal and academic development (bringing more coherence and integration to these roles).
- Give recognition to and greater focus for the role of student guidance and support.
- Create a learning community of colleagues with common interest in developing more proactive systems for supporting student development.
- Emphasise the application of learning in practice and foster an enquiry-based approach to this area of learner support.

Programme Design

The PDHE Award in 'Student Support and Guidance' has been developed at the University of Manchester to:

- Provide a focus for developmental activities throughout the University and help colleagues to spread and share good practice.
- Consider the changing context of student support and guidance at local and national level.

- Focus on examples of proactive, integrated approaches to learner support.
- Provide practical opportunities to develop skills and competencies relating to the support and guidance role.
- Comprise a structured programme of seminars and workshops addressing key areas.
- Offer a supportive environment for staff to review current practices, to acquire new skills and to apply new ideas and concepts in their own work area.
- Give institutional recognition and provide an opportunity to gain a nationally recognised award.

The PDHE objectives have provided an enabling framework in which to focus on the particular area of student support and guidance. It has encouraged a good breadth of focus on the individual (interpersonal skills, personal and professional development needs and issues) their work environment (student support and guidance roles, opportunities for innovation) and the wider context of Higher Education (the changing context of student support and guidance, emerging models). (See appendix 1)

The programme is underpinned by a series of seminars that address student support and guidance from these different levels and perspectives. Themes include: 'taking account of difference', 'integrated approaches to student support' and 'the skilled helper'.

Participants receive mentoring and support throughout the programme in a series of three meetings which assist in 'finding focus', action planning and review, and portfolio preparation.

Participants are made aware that the portfolio is a confidential document that is viewed only by the mentor and the external examiner. However, it is recognised that participants in this CPD programme may develop new approaches, materials and resources that may be useful to a wider audience. In the final meeting with the mentor, participants are asked to identify any parts of the portfolio that may be used for wider dissemination.

Progress and Issues

The programme is at an early stage in its life cycle. A small pilot group of six participants have undertaken the award prior to its full launch in January 2000.

It had been difficult to anticipate the level of demand for this new programme or, indeed, the numbers who would complete it. However, there were a number of early indicators which were positive. There had been a significant response to the range of staff development activities within this project which suggested there were staff who wished to pursue career development opportunities in the area of student support and guidance. The CAAS secondment scheme (see ii above) had received a positive response and applicants have welcomed the opportunity to participate in a structured and supported CPD opportunity.

The composition of the pilot group undertaking the PDHE award was significant. Participants had been associated with PADP development projects in various ways. Three were Learning Advisers. The primary function of the CPD programme was envisaged initially as a dissemination mechanism, a method of sharing the outcomes of the development project with a wider audience. Learning Advisers and members of the project team were to be closely involved in mentoring activities and sharing their work through the seminar programme when fully launched. However, the fact that six participants who have had a close association with the project wished to undertake the award underlines the need for recognition and reward in this area.

The experience of the pilot group highlighted the value of the framework in providing a focus for reflection and action research. It has encouraged participants to reflect on issues arising within the PADP development project and to reflect on key factors and critical incidents which have moved the work forward. This is a valuable feedback mechanism for organisational learning.

For those participants who have been in the pilot group, the following benefits have been identified:

1. *"Something tangible to show for my work in the field of Student Support and Guidance."*
2. *"Part of being a professional is to keep up-to-date and informed on current good practice, and also finding out more about the student support and guidance services available around the university."*
3. *"It's innovative!"*
4. *"It will hopefully continue to help raise the value of teaching and learning in the University."*
5. *"It's been a great learning experience for me, and reflecting on experiences has been useful."*
6. *"If advocating reflective practice, then I should practice what I preach!"*
7. *"It's been very helpful meeting with like-minded people."*
8. *"It's a clear form of Continuing Professional Development which will be relevant for the Institute for Learning and Teaching."*
9. *"Recognition for work already carried out."*

Response to the full launch of the programme has been extremely positive. Twenty five people are registered on the programme, comprising academic, academic related and support staff in roughly equal numbers. The exchange of perspectives and practices within the seminars suggests that this mix of staff is a positive aspect of the course.

At the institutional level, there is a significant level of support for this development. Student support and guidance is a specific category within the Subject Review process and the presence of such a staff development structure can be publicised to those departments preparing for Subject Review.

In the context of ongoing change, in which institutions are required to respond to a changing profile of students, this CPD programme offers a flexible CPD framework which can accommodate developing work in the field of student support and guidance.

SEDA emphasises the complementarity of this award with other professional development frameworks and it is recognised that many participants on the programme will wish to register, or maintain membership, with the Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT). We see the relationship between the PDHE Award and the ILT framework in two ways. Staff preparing for the initial entry route for experienced staff may find participation in the award may assist in the demonstration of evidence under several of the five areas: i) teaching and / or supporting learning; ii) contribution to course design/ planning; iii) provision of feedback or assessment; iv) development of effective learning environments; and v) reflection on personal practice in teaching and learning.

For those colleagues who are members of ILT, the PDHE award will provide clear evidence of continuing professional development in one of the five areas designated. It is perhaps this area we would wish to emphasise. The ILT framework for CPD acknowledges different areas of development and potential for role specialisation. At the institutional level, a greater capacity is being developed to accommodate individual career development in relation to teaching through the development of staff profiles. The PDHE award aligns with these developments in providing a purposeful framework for CPD for those colleagues wishing to develop their expertise in the area of student support and guidance.

Reference

Rouncefield, M and Ward, R (1998) Recording Achievement and Action Planning: a Basis for Progression to Higher Education? *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, **Vol. 26,** No. 1.

Appendix 1

Objectives Framework

Participants in the award are required to demonstrate achievement of six objectives:

Objective:	Areas for Implementation:	Evidence might include:
a) Personal and Professional Coping Strategies	At least two of the following: • Managing time to respond to pressures of post • Recognising and managing stress • Working successfully within available resources • Managing and or working with change	To be discussed with mentor
b) Reflection on personal and professional development needs and in particular continuing professional development	At least two of the following: • Demonstrating self-awareness of approach to learning • Identifying personal strengths and development needs • Participating in appropriate development activities within / beyond the institution • Assessing of learning from process of taking this award and plans for the future	To be discussed with mentor
c) Ability to use specialist knowledge and skills appropriately within the HE context	At least two of the following: • Management / organisational skills • Provision of effective mentoring / tutoring support to students and / or colleagues • Using research and written skills • Bringing experience of other work roles to student support and guidance activities	To be discussed with mentor
d) Interpersonal skills which enable effective communication with staff, students and outside agencies in the area of student support and guidance	At least two of the following: • Maintaining appropriate and useful communication with staff in other student support and guidance roles (eg. Careers, Counselling etc) • Demonstrating awareness of the needs of different learners • Relating successfully with students • Raising profile of student support and guidance within department	To be discussed with mentor
e) Capability of prioritising and organising workload, initiating and responding to new ideas and requests, and reorganising work in the light of new requirements	At least two of the following: • Effective time management in implementing student support and guidance activities • Effective team-working and / or delegation in implementing student support activities • Acquisition of skills to respond to changing situations • Identifying opportunities for innovation within student support and guidance systems	To be discussed with mentor
f) Understanding of role within institution and the wider context of HE	At least two of the following: • Awareness and understanding of the institution's policies relating to student support and guidance and the ability to implement them within their own working environment • Understanding how own role supports policy relating to student support and guidance • Monitoring change in one's own role • Researching SSG issues in the wider context of HE	To be discussed with mentor

Continuous Professional Development

Summary of comments emerging from the Heads of Educational Development Group meeting on 18 February 2000

Setting CPD requirements for Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT) members to remain in 'good standing' presents the Institute with some difficult issues.

The first reason for the difficulty is that there is no tradition of monitoring CPD for teaching staff in higher education. Traditionally, academics have been judged by their peers on their research and publication record - formally assessed through the Research Assessment Excercise (RAE). This process provides no incentives for, and does not pay any attention to, the quality of teaching, support for students, administrative efficiency, or any of the other functions that academics have outside of their research.

Although most Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have appraisal processes in place, these are rarely effective in recording or managing CPD, although we wish to suggest that, they could be so, if supported and strengthened in various ways.

A more fundamental problem is that many academics do not accept the need for CPD - especially in respect of their teaching. Whereas in other professions it is accepted that up-to-date knowledge is essential to remain effective as a practising professional, many academics do not regard familiarity with recent research on learning and teaching to be necessary for them to remain (or become) effective teachers.

Furthermore, academics are suspicious of measures which appear merely to increase the surveillance of their activities without any palpable advantages to themselves or their students. Burdensome quality assurance processes have fuelled staff resistance and defensiveness. The ILT is a new organisation that is trying to increase membership and cannot afford to alienate its potential or existing members. However, it is committed to increasing the status of teaching and enhancing the quality of learning and teaching, which implies setting standards to which staff should aspire.

How can the ILT respond in these difficult circumstances? At the meeting, the Heads of Educational Development Group recognised that it is necessary to distinguish between short-term goals during the period when the ILT is establishing itself, and longer term ambitions. A 'light touch' is probably advisable in the first few years of the ILT's existence. It is also recognised that any process of recognition of CPD cannot be too expensive, either in the time it takes to judge the evidence presented, or financially.

CPD serves two main purposes. Firstly, to monitor that minimum professional standards are being met, and, secondly, to encourage formative and developmental activities which will enhance professional practice. This distinction suggests that there is a difference between the minimum level of engagement in CPD that is required and the optimum level of engagement that might be desirable. However, there should be incentives to encourage staff to move from doing what is merely required of them to higher levels of engagement and personal development.

Our members suggested that two approaches could be adopted. Firstly, staff could be required to undertake an identified number of days in approved staff development activities or achieve a specified number of credit points from 'kite-marked' workshops or other events. This approach might have the effect of boosting numbers of events and attendance at them, but runs the risk of staff attending events to which they pay little attention simply to meet the targets. It is also difficult to predict just how many teaching staff would be willing to attend events to meet their CPD targets. This approach would require educational development departments to apply to the ILT to have their events 'kite-marked' and it would seem unlikely that the ILT would have the resources to manage such a process in the short term.

The alternative approach would be for staff to collect evidence of their personal development against targets either set by the staff member or in agreement with their line manager. In this way the ILT's processes could be aligned with the HEI's own appraisal processes. The ILT's existing headings could be recommended as organising categories for the presentation of evidence. Periodically (3-5 years) members might also be asked to write a reflective review which considers the nature of their current work, the challenges arising and overcome, the learning achieved, the courses taken with outcomes and their future plans for development.

The quality of this evidence would need to be monitored and assessed by someone within the institution whom the ILT would approve as an appropriate 'recogniser / accreditor'. Ideally such people would be those within each HEI who have knowledge of learning and teaching and who have some experience of monitoring portfolios. Such staff are certainly found within educational development units, but also exist within teaching departments. Building a strong cadre of such people in each institution would have added advantages for the ILT.

The advantage of the second approach is that it could strengthen the internal process of appraisal and give a role to educational development units as a link between the ILT and staff within each institution. This would create, in effect, a peer review system within each institution. Periodic moderation would be needed to check standards between institutions, which might strengthen contacts between institutions within regional groupings. Initially, large numbers of moderators would not be necessary, if evidence was checked on a three to five year cycle.

Elements of the first approach can be incorporated into the second model but its main advantage is its flexibility and its responsiveness to individual needs. Consistent standards between institutions might take a while to establish, and there would need to be clearly written guidelines on presentation of acceptable and desirable evidence in portfolios. Increasingly one could expect that portfolios would be presented electronically on-line rather than in a (sometimes unwieldy) paper-based format. Such on-line forms would aid the process of achieving consistency of standards and presentation.

There is no doubt that a process such as this would gain in credibility and value if it was also linked to internal appraisal and promotions systems. If other professional bodies, such as IME, BPS, RIBA, or RICS also required evidence that any staff teaching courses accredited by them were in good standing with the ILT, this would provide a substantial incentive for staff to meet the ILT's CPD standards.

In conclusion we wish to suggest that any CPD requirements should be firmly linked with institutions' own processes if they are to be embedded and widely used. At least in the first years, the requirements should not appear to be too onerous and the processes should be clear and simple. Nevertheless it should be clear that there are expected standards of professional conduct and engagement with professional development.

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Supporting the Continuing Professional Development of Experienced Lecturers

SEDA's South-East region held a seminar on the above topic on 3rd March, and I would like to use the latter part of this article to rehearse some of the issues raised at the meeting.

The first part of the seminar was led by Chris Rust (Oxford Brookes University), who used his experience as an ILT accreditor to give guidance to those who may be assisting colleagues to submit individual applications for membership. There are full accounts on the ILT web site (http://www.ilt.ac.uk) of how accreditors work and what they have been trained to look for in applications, so Chris's comments elaborated or emphasised what was already in the public domain.

His main message was to encourage applicants to move away from simply listing evidence and towards reflection and analysis of what that evidence means to them as a teacher. "Reflection with illustrations is more important", said Chris, "than evidence without reflection."

His second message was that there is enough flexibility in the categories, and in the reflective approach, to enable many different types of staff (from librarians or learning technology advisors through to senior managers) to make successful applications. They need to get behind the criteria to what it really means to support learning in their work, and then use their imagination to present appropriate evidence of their reflective practice and development.

Although the process is intended for the individual, we agreed how useful it was to run workshops as preparation. While there are always colleagues who misread or misinterpret instructions on forms, there are also some who find it harder to articulate or express their reflective or self-developmental process. This is also a process which privileges those who can write well.

Chris also gave guidance on some of the tricky issues which have already arisen. There really is no point in submitting supporting material, appendices, videotapes or CDs, as the accreditors work to such tight deadlines that even illegible handwriting can be a problem. For work that is done in a team, with colleagues or simply because of one's position in an institution, the accreditors rely more heavily on the referees' comments. The currency of the material is usually taken to be three years, so senior managers who have had no recent student feedback (for example) would have to take the principles of evaluation and adapt them imaginatively. Finally, applicants did not have to aim for the full 500 words per section: "Distill the experience", was the message.

The seminar then moved on to how institutions support experienced staff in their pedagogic development. The picture was of enough goodwill and good practice to go forward, but we still have to move fast to build systems and strategies robust enough to carry the expectations.

Let us start with the good news. There is some evidence that staff have found that the application process is developmental in itself - we therefore need to create a supportive environment to keep that momentum going. There is also evidence that professional and subject bodies have responded very positively to discussions about incorporating pedagogic practice into their existing frameworks. There is a strong belief within the ILT that, in the long run, effective CPD is going to be one of the strongest methods of improving students' learning. Therefore there will be wide consultation and extensive trialing to ensure this succeeds, and that a number of different approaches may well emerge from the discussions. If there is a common thread expressed through many forms, its essence is the developmental power of reflection and critical thinking.

One of the areas of greatest difficulty was the relationship between individuals and higher education institutions. We could foresee divergence between the needs of an institution and the preferences of an individual and there was little enthusiasm for interlocking pedagogic CPD with some models of appraisal. Conversely, over-enthusiastic encouragement, with inducements and rewards, might push colleagues into the process without genuine commitment. So much depends on the culture, experience, and morale of each higher education institution and of its departments or schools that successful developments in this area are likely to come from locally-tailored schemes, not national processes.

Finally, we noted the potential significance of a number of ideas which were worth exploring:

- how the experience of nurse education was revealing the effectiveness of personal development portfolios as a continuing encouragement for development
- that the pressure for real and effective staff development policies at local and international level was now irresistible
- that the EFFECTS project at the University of Plymouth has derived a framework for developers CPD programme (http://sh.plym.ac.uk/eds/effects)
- and that a department or school with a real developmental focus (the ILT categories are easily transferable) would be a very effective agent of change.

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Forthcoming SEDA Conferences and Events

SEDA / TLTP3 One Day Event
Support for Key Skills on the Web
18 May 2000
Sheffield Hallam University

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

SEDA Scotland Conference
Developing Students' Higher Level Abilities
19 June 2000
University of Dundee

SEDA Winter Conference
5th Annual Conference for Staff and Educational Developers
Manchester Conference Centre

20 November 2000
Pre-conference workshop day

21 - 22 November 2000
Annual conference

SEDA Continuing Professional Development Survey 1998/9 - a report

Ranald Macdonald FSEDA, SEDA Co-Chair
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In 1998 I made an application for a SEDA Small Grant to carry out a survey of how continuing professional development (CPD) needs were identified and met amongst staff and educational developers. The main aim of the exercise was to provide information for the SEDA Executive on which to base our strategic planning. Two surveys were carried out: one a postal survey of SEDA members, the other at a plenary session during the 1998 staff and educational development conference. A workshop at the 1999 conference helped to analyse the information and provide advice to the SEDA Executive. The respondents were distributed in the table opposite.

	SEDA Members' mailing	SEDA Conference plenary session
Old University	23	35
New University (including colleges of HE)	26	54
Other	2	6
Totals	*51*	*95*

The questions in the two questionnaires were slightly different so sections 1-4 below refer to the SEDA Conference responses. Section 5 contains responses from both questionnaires.

1. Participants responded that their CPD needs were identified by: self reflection (74 replies); appraisal (47); informally/discussion with colleagues (20); discussion with managers (14); needed for job (12). Others included through the institutional development process, SEDA Fellowship, training courses, evaluation from course participants, student feedback, staff questionnaire, and professional body requirements.

Needs were then met by: conferences (32); self provided/initiated (30); courses (external) (21); courses (internal) (18); reading (15); on the job (12). Others included SEDA Fellowship, negotiated with line manager, supportive team, SEDA course, contact expert, mentoring/critical friend, involvement in research projects, sitting on committees, own research, subject association, talking to people, involvement in new projects, portfolio reflection, action learning set, run staff development activities and learning from participants.

2. When asked what CPD needs they saw themselves having in (a) the next year and (b) over the next 3-5 years, respondents replied: IT skills and the role of C&IT (40); management development (including budget management) (22); SEDA Fellowship (20); time management/prioritising skills (12); writing for publication (10); understanding the national context/external environment (10); PhD (9). Others related to specific skills, personal (including time and stress) management, research, professional theory and practice as educational developers.

3. Questions were also asked about which of SEDA's activities contribute to, or don't seem relevant to, the individual's CPD. Relevant activities included: conferences/events (75); publications (55); networking (33); SEDA Fellowship (15); accreditation (11); opportunities to write/publish; accredited post graduate certificates; membership of committees. Those which were thought to be less relevant, at least in the short term, included accreditation schemes (17); SEDA Fellowship (10); networks (10); publications; subject specific workshops/publications

4. A further question asked what else could SEDA do to meet the CPD needs of respondents and their colleagues? Answers included: networking opportunities (11); management development (5); regional or local events (5); cheaper regional events (5); support for staff developers (5); recognition of staff and educational development as a profession. Unsurprisingly there were numerous other suggestions around support for their practice as educational developers, CPD, research, information and the provision of services.

5. A final question asked for other suggestions, ideas or comments - there were over 70 of these! A workshop at the 1999 SEDA staff and educational developers conference summarised these as:

- Provision for both new and established educational developers
- Remaining close to 'teachers'
- Getting involved with the Subject Centres
- Retaining academic and professional respectability
- Help to see Professional Development as 'Continuing' by providing tools/skills, 'master classes', learning sets, etc
- Have a political role and 'take a stance' on issues.

The findings of the surveys and workshop were reported to the SEDA Executive strategy meeting in February 2000 and have been incorporated into plans for future activities. A report of that meeting appears elsewhere in this edition of Educational Developments. My thanks to all those who contributed to this survey by completing questionnaires or taking part in the workshop. I hope that the activities we put on to support your continuing professional development in the future address the needs you have - however they are identified!

SEDA Networks Directory

The primary purpose of the SEDA Networks Directory is to enable those people running teaching and learning networks to contact and support each other, and share best practice in the organisation and maintenance of networks.

The Directory can be found on the *DeLiberations* web site at:

http://www.lgu.ac.uk/deliberations/seda-networks/

Reviews

Books

Teaching for Quality Learning at University

John Biggs

The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press (1999) £16.99 pbk
ISBN 0 335201 71 7

I wish I'd read this book sooner. In fact, despite the title's emphasis on 'university', the book would benefit anybody in further and higher education. It would also make interesting reading for those not involved in teaching, as it communicates well the intricacies of evaluation and the processes involved in planning a course. Quality teaching and learning aren't just about filling in forms, or applying formulaic methods across the board, but about fitting teaching methods and assessment strategies to the required outcomes, which vary widely between disciplines.

Biggs begins by identifying the usual problems with education today: increased administrative requirements, large classes, fewer staff, shorter academic years and the rest. He isn't trying to make excuses, or bemoan the situation, but he establishes a context within which, he suggests, it would be wise to adopt new strategies to cope with the pressures. The strategies he recommends are all extremely useful and thought-provoking. Not all of them will be relevant to individual needs (that's not his intention), but there are enough to provide a useful menu of options, each of which is designed to focus assessment tasks on encouraging quality learning on the part of the student.

Biggs has previously developed a method, called 'SOLO', for producing a conceptual framework for teaching, learning and assessment. Here, he demonstrates how, listing outcomes as a hierarchy of verbs and levels of student engagement and reflection, it is possible to create a teaching and assessment strategy which can cope not only with large classes, but with the wider range of abilities and motivations resulting from widening participation. The author explains how certain assessment tasks produce 'backwash' - students learn in order to pass the test, structuring their note-taking and revision to get through the task. The SOLO method allows lecturers to avoid such surface learning tasks and to concentrate on those which elicit a deeper, more reflective response from students. The suggested methods also manage to balance quality of outcome with ease of assessment. It's a fascinating concept and one worthy of wider understanding.

Of equal note are Biggs' arguments against norm-referenced assessment, or 'grading along the curve', and in favour of criterion-referenced assessment. Problems with converting grades such as 'Distinction', 'Merit' and 'Pass' into percentages, and the weighting of different tasks, are also tackled. Methods such as multiple choice tests are effectively debunked (students simply eliminate the obviously wrong answers, then guess between the remaining options), and there is justified concern about the consistency of marks for essays - the evidence presented is frightening.

This book is a treasure-trove of ideas, many of which I will be adopting for my own teaching. Course leaders and university managers should make the book a priority read, while humbler souls would do well to look at least at the last few chapters for inspiration in their spare moments.

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Developing Teachers: The Challenges of Lifelong Learning

Christopher Day

Falmer Press, London (1999) £15.95
ISBN 0 750707 47 X

The author describes this as a 'holistic view of continuing professional development of teachers' and that is exactly what it is. There is something here for teachers and their managers, teacher educators, researchers and anyone else with a responsibility for planning and enabling staff development. It focuses on the school context, but much of the book transfers well to the post-compulsory sector.

The early chapters give a critical overview of some key ideas relevant to teacher development, building on Schon's writing about reflective practice, Dreyfus' and Dreyfus' 'novice to expert' model and Eraut's 'domains of knowledge'. The book goes on to look at the topic through different contexts: teacher experience, leadership, appraisal, in-service education and training, partnerships and networks. A final chapter looks at the role of teachers in a 'learning society'.

A strength of the book is the breadth and detail of references to research and other literature. A further strength is the connection the author continually makes between research, theory and practice. While avoiding a simplistic 'checklist' approach, he refers to a wide range of models which can be used in a very practical way to support planning. Those who like to visualise ideas will find the frequent use of figures helpful.

The concept of lifelong learning, half-promised by the title, was not really addressed. The case for teachers to engage in it was made, but what the author understood by this catch-all term, and how the teaching profession might respond to some of the conflicting interpretations, was less clear. Although this was a slight disappointment, other important, and linked, issues were raised throughout the book, for example: the difficulties in applying a linear model; the use of benchmark competences; and the conflict between an instrumental 'training' approach and the development of autonomous, responsible and accountable professionals.

If you want to take stock of what professional development means today this is an excellent resource. It takes a very wide and critical look at professional development and offers a timely opportunity to review its purpose as teachers come under increasing pressure inside and outside the classroom.

Jan Smith
Sheffield Hallam University

Assessing Student Learning in Higher Education

George Brown, Joanna Bull and Malcolm Pendlebury

Routledge (1997) £53.00 / £15.99
ISBN 0 415162 26 2 (hbk)
ISBN 0 415144 60 4 (pbk)

Assessment is an important part of education which affects both students' learning and life chances. As the authors say, educators are 'marking students for life'. So a book like this which encourages educators to undertake efficient, high quality and innovative assessment is most welcome. Unfortunately, it may be read only by those who are sufficiently interested in or concerned about assessment to seek a book which informs their practice. It's unfortunate because this is

worthwhile reading for any teacher in higher education, applicable to a broad spectrum of disciplines.

The book provides an overview of assessment, examining and student learning. There are chapters relating to specific issues such as assessing problem solving and using multiple choice questions and useful discussions about reliability and validity. The book is practical, full of research evidence, suggestions for further reading, sound assessment principles, and advice about designing, conducting and evaluating assessment. The activities should generate discussion between colleagues and highlight differences in values. The book feels like a textbook and should be read in short sections as information is required, rather than read as an argument from beginning to end.

For some time now, UK examination boards have provided schools with quality assessments and maintained standards by tackling many of the issues raised in this book. This may be reflected in the authors' suggestion that 'A' level multiple choice questions might be adapted for first year courses. However, the number of 'A' level multiple choice papers is decreasing and the questions may need updating rather than adapting.

The references to graduateness (the common attributes of graduates) and the Higher Education Quality Council (now the Quality Assurance Agency) are reminders that this book was published three years ago and that higher education is changing quickly. However the discussions about quality, standards and purposes of higher education are still relevant. If assessment as advocated here were widely translated into practice, an improvement in the quality of assessment in higher education could follow.

Jackie Greatorex
University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate

Benchmarking and Threshold Standards in Higher Education

Helen Smith, Michael Armstrong and Sally Brown
Kogan Page (1999) £22.50
ISBN 0 749430 33 8

The application of benchmarking methods to higher education has prompted a number of debates. This book focuses on the contested meanings attached to the twin concepts of developmental benchmarking or promoting best practice and regulatory benchmarking defined as assuring quality and standards.

In a short review it is impossible to indicate the full extent of the debate. I have therefore tried to capture major issues. In Chapter 1 Michael Armstrong sets the current benchmarking scene well and draws attention to some key critical debates eg. the nature and purpose of a degree, standards over time, ownership and control of standards and accountability. He points out that the Graduate Standards Project (GSP) initially focused on comparability of output but, as the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) subsequently conceded, other factors such as the conduct of academic staff, educational ability of student intake, curriculum design and regulatory frameworks are also significant in the endeavour to define quality. Measuring needs to be undertaken using common criteria but as Armstrong reports 'simple comparisons of achieved performance cannot be made, since marks / grades and degree classifications are not given against fixed criteria which span an individual institution or subject discipline, let alone HE as a whole...' (Yorke, 1998 cited by Armstrong). Furthermore, even if this were possible, merely comparing performance would not tell us how to improve it.

Armstrong's chapter sets the agenda for other contributions which include 'How can Threshold Standards Assure and Enhance Quality?', written by Sally Brown. She rightly points out that quality assurance rests on the ability to: measure performance against identified standards; identify the extent to which targets are set and achieved; evaluate accurately how far evidence matches with assertion; and highlight areas of good practice as well as identify poor performance. Brown thus argues that threshold standards and common criteria can assure quality by enabling one institution to evaluate its performance against another. This argument falls into the same incomparability trap that schools encounter with league tables of results. Even if we had a national Higher Education curriculum with all its dangers, including that of 'dumbing down' by defining subjects in terms of minimal achievements or the lowest common denominator (Goodlad, Chapter 4), intake would still differ. However, the most important point made by Brown is that undertaking the process of identifying standards encourages us to be critical of 'tried and tested' methods for assuring quality and recognise the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the current quality debate.

This book is worth reading as it encourages us to challenge many of the assumptions about quality, the worst of which merely presumes all is well because the process is obscure. Making the issue of quality in higher education a transparent developmental process is important in a massively expanded education sector, despite some of the dangers and difficulties highlighted here.

Irene Selway
University of Portsmouth

Universities and the Creation of Wealth

Edited by Harry Gray
SRHE / Open University Press (1999) £19.99
ISBN 0 335203 09 4 pbk

I found this book disappointing, but that may be because of false expectations raised by the title and the reputation of its editor, Harry Gray, doyen of Enterprise in Higher Education. At this point in time, I had expected a forthright work that clearly set out the case for higher education but at the end I felt that I had read an apologetic for the higher education policies of Thatcherite governments of both political hues. Of course, any book that is a mélange of contributions runs the danger of appearing an exotic cocktail to some whilst remaining a stodgy broth to others! And presumably the gestation time of the book accounts for the absence of any reference to the 'third leg', HEROBC (if that is the correct acronym this month) and other such initiatives - as I read the book, for example, my newspaper was open at an advertisement for posts at the new Manchester Science Enterprise Centre.

One high spot is the chapter by Martin and Trudeau which attempts a serious statistical analysis of the economic impact of higher education in Canada. Despite attaching a greater degree of certainty to their analysis - for example in Appendix D, the multiplying of a (presumably!) accurate number of graduates by a crude estimate of differential income of $7500 to produce a figure cited as $6,254,812,500 when the accuracy beyond the second significant figure is debatable - than I felt was justified in one or two places, this chapter represents a valuable contribution. The Canadians appear to be well ahead of us in this regard (for example, see Burton L E (1992) **Developing Resourceful Humans: Adult Education Within the Economic Context**. London: Routledge).

The second part of the book comprises case studies, although again I found them disappointing. To me they appeared to owe more to public relations puff than to academic analysis. However, it does produce the gem (p125) that the University of Salford's attempts at blurring the distinctions between education and training were hatched by the Vice-Chancellor designate whilst still in the Cabinet Office.

The final chapter tries to set out a design for a community university with an unhappy compounding of an almost Freirean pedagogy with the somewhat instrumentalist approach to training that we are accustomed to see in the DfEE. Harry Gray may well be right; this may be the future. But I would hope that universities could do better than this.

Bland Tomkinson
UMIST

A Review of On-Line Resources for Computer-Assisted Assessment

Colleen McKenna and Ian Hesketh
CAA Centre, University of Luton

Recent rises in student numbers, coupled with a decline in resources, have led universities to investigate new ways of assessing students. A particular growth area is the use of computer-assisted assessment (CAA) for the diagnostic, formative and summative assessment of undergraduates. A recent survey into the use of CAA in UK HE found that over 80 universities and colleges of higher education reported some use of CAA. According to the survey, CAA is predominantly used in computing, sciences and maths; however, there is evidence of increased take-up in social sciences and humanities courses. (CAA Centre, 1999).

CAA encompasses the use of computers to deliver, mark and analyse assignments or examinations. It also includes the collation and analysis of optically-captured data gathered from machines such as optical mark readers. The combination of assessment and technology means that the successful implementation of CAA usually involves a diverse collection of people from across an institution including staff developers, academics, computing services personnel, senior managers and quality assurance staff.

This variegated nature of CAA is reflected in the type and range of resources that are available online. Increasingly, such resources address issues of pedagogy, evaluation and quality in addition to the more technical aspects of CAA, such as software design, computing infrastructure and security.

This review considers a number of resources in the following categories:

- General CAA resources
- Question design and test construction
- Subject-specific examples of CAA
- Online publications
- Software (higher education projects)
- Software (commercial)
- Mailing lists.

While not exhaustive, this selection of sites is representative of the electronic materials and tools currently available to support the use of CAA.

The **general CAA sites** are useful starting points for those new to the field. The CAA Centre site aims to appeal to both novices and experienced practitioners, while the Loughborough CAA unit site is especially strong on optically-captured CAA.

The **question design** resources offer detailed guidance on writing effective objective test questions. For examples of such questions grouped according to discipline, see the **subject-specific CAA section**. Of the resources listed, Mathletics, MedWeb and Loughborough Engineering provide an especially impressive selection of questions.

The **Online publications** identifies pieces covering a wide range of CAA issues from the automated marking of essays to quality assurance protocols for computerised examination. Of particular interest are R E Bennett's "Reinventing Assessment" and Dan Charman and Andrew Elmes' *Computer-based Assessment: A Guide To Good Practice.*

Of the **software sites** (which detail HE-funded projects as well as commercial suppliers), CASTLE is an excellent resource. Even those new to CAA can create questions in minutes, and this ease-of -use coupled with the capacity to create "live" questions, makes this a good site to include in training workshops. In addition to demonstrating web-based CAA software, the CASTLE site also offers support materials on question design and links to examples of the software being used in UK universities. The Question Mark site also provides product examples and a range of support materials and downloadable demonstration versions of its software.

General CAA Resources

CAA Centre
Funded by HEFCE under the TLTP 3 programme, the Centre seeks to promote a better understanding of CAA by the identification of good practice, ways to overcome pedagogic, organisational and technical difficulties of using CAA, and the dissemination of evaluation and implementation models. The site contains an FAQ, a "Getting Started" page, a comprehensive listing of electronic and paper-based resources and a searchable bibliography.

Scottish Computer Assisted Assessment Network (SCAAN)
Funded by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, SCAAN disseminates information to the Scottish HE community about the use of computers for assessment and is currently evaluating three particular computer-based assessment engines: Miranda, Triads and WebTest.

Loughborough University - Computer Assisted Assessment (CAA) Unit
Maintained by Learning and Teaching Development at Loughborough University, this site contains information about CAA procedures, conferences, article abstracts and additional references.

Charles Stuart University - Educational Technology
Aimed at those interested in improving effectiveness in teaching and learning and in particular, investigating ways of promoting student learning through formative computer based assessment techniques.

Question design and test construction

CAA Centre
The Centre's 'Guide to Designing Objective Test Questions', provides an introduction to the range and anatomy of questions commonly used in CAA.

University of Illinois (Office of Instructional Resources)
A self-instruction booklet highlighting advantages and limitations of a range of question types; it also includes very practical suggestions for test item evaluation.

University of Cape Town
A guide to the design and management of MCQs.

Software (HE projects)

CASTLE (Computer ASsisted Teaching and LEarning) Project
CASTLE is a web-based system for creating CAA. This site highlights a number of clear examples of the successful integration of formative computer-based assessment into delivery programmes using the CASTLE authoring shell.

Clyde Virtual University (CVU) Assessment Engine
An example of integrated electronic delivery and assessment on an institutional level.

Hot Potatoes
Web -based assessment system developed by "Half-baked Software" (University of Victoria) which is available as a freeware suite. Question formats available include multiple-choice, short-answer, jumbled sentence, crossword, matching / ordering and gap-fill. See the website for an extensive review of the product.

TAL (Test and Learn)
TAL is a web-based assessment system designed at Bristol University to deliver tests in mathematics for engineering students. This

site includes details of TAL components (Test Editor, Question Editor), information about using MCQs and question banks.

TRIADS (Tripartite Interactive Assessment Delivery System)
TRIADS is an Authorware-based CAA system, and the site demonstrates impressive examples of interactive diagrammatic/graphical questions which are possible in the TRIADS environment.

TACO (Teaching and Coursework Online)
A project providing background, working examples and published evaluation of use. Notable in its application to the delivery and assessment of Classics.

WebTest
WebTest is a system for creating, delivering and marking web-based assessments. Features include the randomisation of questions, ability to display maps and scientific formulae, and the creation of diagrams and graphs on the fly.

Software (commercial)

Question Mark Computing Limited
Question Mark is the leading commercial supplier of assessment software in the UK. The site provides working examples of a range of question types found in their products. Downloads of trial versions of both Designer for Windows and Perception are available as are case studies, sample assessments and articles.

Smartlite Software - WinAsks Professional
Software for the development of secure tests and questionnaires delivered using Windows 3.1 or higher.

WebMCQ
An assessment service based in Australia, which hosts and maintains web-based tests. Site contains demonstrations of types of assessments supported.

EQL - Interactive Assessor
A Windows system for creating question banks, generating customised tests, running tests and providing automatic results analysis.

Subject Specific Examples of CAA

CAA Centre
The "Resources" section of the site provides a subject by subject list of online examples of CAA use and development.

Economics
The Economics LTSN (University of Bristol) aims to develop a subject-based question bank. The site contains an article by Guy Judge (1999) The Production and Use of Online Quizzes for Economics in *CHEER*, 13: 1.

Engineering
See the Faculty of Engineering, Loughborough University, for a range of self-assessment tutorials constructed using the CASTLE assessment tool.

Geology
A good example of innovative web-based questions in geology, created by Dr Roger Suthren at Oxford Brookes University.

Mathematics
Developed by Martin Greenhow, *Mathletics* was designed to 'Diagnose freshers' mathematical abilities and preparedness'.

Medicine
Developed by David Davies at the University of Birmingham, *Med Web* site contains MCQ databases (mainly but not exclusively on medical topics) as well as a system for generating web-based assessments from pre-existing or new questions.

Poetry
The University of Sunderland *POETICA* (Programme for Orientation, Education and Telematics Implementation in Critical Analysis) uses hypertext structures to integrate electronic digital course material into the teaching and learning of poetry and stylistic analysis of poetry.

Psychology
Russ Dewey's *Psych Web* contains a range of self-assessment tests. Questions contain good examples of distracters and feedback.

Online Publications

Bennett, RE (1998) **Reinventing Assessment.** Princeton: Educational Testing Service.

This stimulating paper considers the future of computerised assessment and speculates on the potential of multimedia to change the face of examinations.

Bull, J (1999) A Glimpse of the Future. In Brown, S, Bull, J and Race, P (eds) **Computer-Assisted Assessment in Higher Education**, London: Kogan Page. 193-197.

This piece considers current practice in CAA vis-a-vis strategic management and quality assurance and speculates on future developments in the field.

Burstein, J *et al* (1999) Using Lexical Semantic Techniques to Classify Fee-Responses. In *The Depth and Breadth of Semantic Lexicons.*

This article provides an excellent account of the current state of computerised analysis of free-text responses. It describes the use of lexical semantic techniques for the automated scoring of short-answer and essay responses. See this site for other articles on the same topic.

Charman, D and Elmes, A (1998) **Computer-based Assessment: A Guide to Good Practice**

This comprehensive handbook on Computer-based assessment covers pedagogical issues, overcoming obstacles, question design, test design and delivery. Volume two contains 11 detailed case studies.

Danson, M and Sherratt, R (eds) (1999) **Proceedings of Third Annual Computer Assisted Assessment Conference.**

Contains a wide variety of articles on recent research in CAA.

Hopkins, C (1998) Web+Q mark+Humanities=? in *Computers And Texts*, **Volume 16.**

One of the few papers which describes the use of CAA in the humanities. Detailed case study of the implementation, evaluation and revision of CAA in a module on modernism at Sheffield Hallam University.

King, T (1997) Recommendations for Managing the Implementation of Computer Aided Assessment, *Active Learning* **6.**

This article builds on the findings of a pilot study for the expansion of CAA in the Department of Information Systems at the University of Portsmouth. Addresses the management and wide scale implementation of CAA.

McKenna, C and Bull, J (2000) Quality Assurance of Computer-assisted Assessment: practical and strategic issues, *Quality Assurance in Education* **8**: 1.

This paper considers the institutional management of CAA, the development of quality

assurance protocols and the evaluation of CAA Systems.

Phelps, J and Danson, M (2000) Provision of Quality Assured CAA Systems: a co-operative approach), *Quality Assurance in Education* 8: 1.

This paper describes recent approaches taken by Loughborough University to provide a quality-based system for the effective deployment of CAA across the institution.

Mailing Lists

Computer-assisted-assessment
A list originally set-up by the National Council for Educational Technology with Project ALTER, for those interested in the use of IT in assessment. Now run by the CAA Centre.

Web-assisted-assessment
Hosted by the CASTLE project, for those interested in conducting assessment using the WWW.

CAA is a rapidly growing area in higher education and the above sites represent only a selection of the many online CAA resources. For a larger range of resources, and for further information on the topic, please visit the CAA Centre website:

http://caacentre.ac.uk

A full list of links to all the above resources can be found on the SEDA website at:

http://www.seda.demon.co.uk/eddevs/caalist.html

And an on-line version of last issue's review of virtual learning environments can also be found on the SEDA website at:

http://www.seda.demon.co.uk/eddevs/virtlearn.html

Correction

The authors of the article 'Dear Vice Chancellor' which appeared on page 18 of issue 1.1 were incorrectly given as Richard and Elizabeth Grover.

The authors were in fact Richard and Christine Grover and the Editors apologise for this mistake.

SEDA Executive Strategy Meeting
9 - 10th February 2000

Given the significant changes to the environment in which SEDA finds itself, the SEDA Executive decided to hold two strategy meetings during 2000. The first, in February, looked broadly at our strategy and the second, in September, will provide guidance to committees when preparing their plans for the following year. As well as members of the Executive, Committee Chairs are invited as they provide an important link between decisions we make and how these are turned into actions through their various activities such as publications, events and accreditation.

An initial "What's on top?" session provided the context for the rest of the day as everyone was able to reflect on their individual and institutional situations as staff and educational developers. We turned to Graham Gibbs' article in the last edition of Educational Developments and the challenges to us of increasingly being faced by 'bottom up' demands for support and the requirements of 'top down' policies, not least through the introduction of institutional learning and teaching strategies. One conclusion we reached was that, faced by this dilemma, we needed to reflect on whether we need to do things differently. As an organisation we aim to provide support and development in a wide variety of contexts to the growing numbers of staff, with very different roles and responsibilities, involved in educational development. This includes Pro-Vice Chancellors and Heads of Departments; teaching staff interested in changes in learning and teaching; staff in a variety of support roles, including in Learning Centres and other central departments; educational development units themselves; staff engaged in funded educational projects such as the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning; and a growing number of external agencies or partners involved in providing 'higher' education.

Key issues for SEDA include how we support the needs of new developers; accreditation of activities related to learning and teaching and then ongoing continuing professional development; how best to collaborate with other organisations; enhancing our position as a professional association; and underpinning our activities with robust research and scholarly activities. There is also a need for us to take on an advocacy or championing role, making appropriate representations to consultations and seeking to work with other influential agencies. We believe we are good at providing support and development, not least in the area of accreditation, but that there may come a point where we have to hand over implementation and delivery and move into new activities.

A main outcome of the meeting is that, having identified our core activity and constituencies, we need to develop a series of projects on which we can focus our energies. These would involve cross committee or functional activities to provide a comprehensive package of support. Three ideas were developed:

Project 1: Meeting the needs of developers, particularly those new to the area, and supporting a life cycle of educational developers as they move through a variety of roles during their careers. Neill Thew (Chair, SEDA Publications) and Rhona Sharpe (Chair, SEDA Fellowships) agreed to take forward this area.

Project 2: Accreditation. The aim of this project is to consider how to reconfigure our accreditation framework and schemes in light of SEDA's redefined purpose. Liz Shrives and Chris Rust (SEDA Co-ordinators for Accreditation) would take this forward.

Project 3: Modes of collaboration. This project aims to explore the potential for, and benefits and dangers for our broad constituency from, collaborations (broadly defined) with other organisations to support our primary focus. Liz Beaty and Ranald Macdonald (SEDA Co-Chairs) will carry out an analysis of values / principles, activities, membership, aims and services of other organisations to map against SEDA's to determine where we can work together to our mutual benefits.

Our discussions also included how we might best increase our international activities, not least through our role within the International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED), whilst continuing to work with an increasingly diverse constituency of staff and educational developers -however defined. A major concern we have is for the renewal of our committees and the Executive and we always welcome offers from anyone interested in taking part in whatever role. So please contact any of the Committee Chairs or either of us if you would like to get involved and help to keep SEDA at the forefront of future educational developments.

Ranald Macdonald FSEDA and Professor Liz Beaty FSEDA
SEDA Co-Chairs

Orientations to Educational Development

Dr Ray Land FSEDA
Director, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Assessment, University of Edinburgh

Over the last two years the SEDA Small Grants initiative helped fund a qualitative study of educational developers as a community of practice. Using Stones' (1996) notions of 'agent conduct analysis' and 'agent context analysis' as a way of understanding practice, the research sought to characterise the strategic conduct of developers as mapped against the organisational forms and academic cultures within which they work. The study involved thirty-three respondents in twenty-two UK higher education institutions (HEIs), the latter chosen to represent large and small, old, new and middle-aged institutions. Twelve orientations to educational development were identified from the data. These are analytic categories which include the attitudes, knowledge, aims and action tendencies of educational developers in relation to the contexts and challenges of their practice, but they do not relate to developers' personal characteristics, and are not fixed. Most of us would probably find ourselves represented in a profile of several of these orientations as we go about our practice in different contexts. You might like to compare your own way of working against this typology.

1 Managerial (Human Resource Management)

Respondents with a strong managerial orientation reflect this concern in the views they hold concerning the need for strong strategic leadership in institutions, seeing this goal-oriented approach as more professional and effective.

> 'I think the issue here is the need to develop strategic leadership ... I think institutions can also become good at institutional signalling. They can do this through contractual requirements, performance review, putting appropriate policies in place, applying resource constraints. These are all levers for change that can be used but all the levers must be pointing in the same direction, and this leads us back to the need for clear strategic direction and management.'

Some developers of a managerial orientation ally themselves fairly firmly with aspects of the institutional mission, almost to the point of devising institutional systems that will render the educational process teacher-proof.

> 'Teachers have an obligation to teach well. Institutions have an obligation to make it possible for teachers to teach well. They actually have an obligation ..to make it difficult or impossible in the medium term for teachers to teach badly. And staff developers have the role of helping all this good stuff happen. And that's where I locate myself in the grand scheme of things.'

2 Political-strategic (Investor)

Other educational developers appear to operate more from a belief that strategic action depends upon the operation of influence and power relationships within the micropolitics of higher education organisations. From this perspective, as Educational Development is often perceived by some colleagues as marginal, vulnerable and, because of its centralised 'top-sliced' funding, a somewhat 'parasitic' operation, it behoves educational developers to keep a wary weather-eye on shifts in organisational power relations, and to seek strategic alliances or support from wherever they may be gained. The need for effective positioning of an EDU within an organisation in order to maximise advantages of power becomes paramount.

> 'For units there is an important question to be addressed, which is "What kind of beast do you want to be?" Are you a training unit operating at that level and offering skills courses on, say, how to use the Web, or do you see yourself as being about R&D, as part and parcel of the executive arm of the institution?'

Informal personal contacts or networks, and the identification of powerful champions for an organisational cause are seen by developers of a political orientation as more effective bases of strategic action than more formal reporting channels.

> 'I must be honest it's only in the last eighteenth months / two years I've used the going-around-and-having-a-cup-of-coffee-and-a-word-in-the right ear. I was very naive and thought you could do it all sort of by-the-book and a few committees. Doesn't work. It's more important I think to have influential people on your side...and informally, or dropping something out and saying "I've done this. I'll send you a copy" - if the person's fairly important, you know.'

The notion of 'investing', of calculating the risks of any adopted line of strategy also emerges as a feature of this orientation.

> 'I probably haven't taken enormous risks. I don't normally involve us in things which are doomed to failure - only things that have a reasonably good chance.'

3 Entrepreneurial

Certain developers tend to have a particularly outward-focused orientation which might be described as 'entrepreneurial'. Interestingly several of the respondents indicating such an orientation tended to have moved into educational development through previous involvement in Enterprise in Higher Education (EHE) funded projects within their institution. Many of the values and *modi operandi* of entrepreneurial developers appear to have been carried over into their subsequent educational development roles. The development orientation they exemplify is characterised by a number of related qualities including: a strong focus on incorporating graduate employability factors within the higher education curriculum, such as transferable skills and involvement in the development of partnerships with external agencies both locally and internationally; concern with access and equity issues, particularly in relation to the needs of mature students and involvement in community development.

> 'Its culture is really geared towards employability in all shapes and forms and goes beyond the idea that we're going to produce business studies graduates. So even with the media, arts, communication type approaches there is still an eye on graduate employment. There's a culture that is geared towards friendliness and high quality teaching provision. There isn't so much of a research culture.'

The preferred operational approaches of these developers appear to be strongly project-driven, both internally and externally, and they are frequently active and often successful in pursuing opportunities to acquire funding for policy-related projects.

> 'I think that the focal point for project work is important, I mean we've been fairly successful over the years in utilising externally funded projects to initiate change by bringing money and support from elsewhere but very rarely or never

really doing it to do something that we wouldn't want to do anyway.'

4 Romantic (Ecological Humanist)

A quite different orientation is one which is directed principally towards the academic as an *individual practitioner*, towards his or her personal development, growth and well-being. Some developers see the most effective aspect of their practice, and their major contribution and skill, being at the personal level.

'It really is important to go home at night with that feeling inside that you have been effective, and the most important way that I know that I get that feeling is when I work effectively and see an individual, see change or enabling change with someone, in a context which is concrete, and where someone is going to try something that you have hoped to lead them towards or support. Or even better, when you get feedback from it and someone has been successful. I think that is just *rich*. It is terribly important.'

The influence of a counselling approach is strong within this orientation.

'If I work with an individual I never represent myself as an expert; it is always the *enabling*. If you like, the counselling, rapport, enablement of other people, to find within themselves .. It's heavily influenced ultimately by Carl Rogers .. to provide freedom in structures and, in the case of counselling theory, freedom of space for individuals to explore their concerns and their resources in their own way.'

5 Vigilant Opportunist

There was a clear orientation arising from many of the interviews undertaken with practitioners towards the need to remain vigilant for opportunities, either within the institution or within the wider higher educational environment. One educational developer uses a metaphor of predation to describe this tendency:

'I think it's like most things in educational development. You alight on some shiny substance, raven-like, and if it's really nice you kind of fly off with it and show it to as many people as you think might be interested or something.'

A Head of Educational Development talks of hitching the Unit's activities to promising passing juggernauts, such as Subject Review, but emphasises the importance of timing in such opportunistic incursions.

'One of the things I have learned in doing the job over the years is that timing is everything. And I think now lots of people do realise just exactly that...if your timing is wrong and people don't see the need to do it there and then, even though you might be right and you've diagnosed it absolutely 100%, it'll not happen. They're busy, they've got a lot to do, and if they don't think it needs to happen tomorrow, basically they're not going to do it. You'll get enthusiasts doing it but you'll not get widespread change. You can get them to address it when they all kind of recognise it's now becoming an imperative.'

Developers quite openly admit the fashionable appeal of certain topical developments (again drawing attention implicitly to the appropriacy of timing). One experienced developer uses the metaphor of flotsam to describe this tendency.

'Well you focus, you focus on the issues of the day, don't you? Five years ago I was mostly talking to people about teaching large groups. They haven't gone away but now the heat's off and now we're talking more about ways in which we can support learning through learning resources and particularly IT. So it's with the fashion, you kind of float (if we're using the watery metaphor) you hang on to the bit of old door that you can and try not to get too swept away and actually what surfaces is what you work with. ...And that's not to say the other stuff isn't all there underneath and isn't going to pop up any minute, but we can't do the whole thing all the time.'

However, not all the effort invested in opportunistic excursions is rewarded.

'In this line of business you have to cast an awful lot of bread on an awful lot of water. And sometimes what you end up with is just a lot of soggy bread.'

6 Researcher

There is an assumption amongst certain educational developers that the use of educational research findings is what influences research-minded academic colleagues.

'The thing is I think the power of ideas as a change mechanism. I think that's the thing that is critical to the development process, that academics will respond to the power of ideas.'

The same respondent also finds the distinction between theory and practice unhelpful. It is a question of enabling colleagues in other research disciplines to have ownership of educational research.

'I see my role really has a lot to do with the interface between theory and practice and trying to apply the research to pragmatic problems, but then using that application and going back and looking at theoretical models. I can't see these as being separate. They are just so intimately related together. I go into a department like Marketing and they have their set of problems but I'm looking at the research and I'm coming back with some solutions but I'm trying to push the boundaries of what they're doing outwards and I'm trying to make the research something that they have ownership of in some way. And I try to make them realise that there is research out there all the time.'

7 Professional Competence

Other developers appear to focus more on the achievement of technical and professional *competence*. In this orientation developers' seek to build academics' confidence by enabling them to demonstrate achievement of a prescribed set of learning outcomes for professional practice. The emphasis lies predominantly on 'classroom' expertise, the technical aspects of practice, and competent performance in other predominantly teaching and learning-related professional settings.

'And what they're saying is "We want a qualification". They don't give a damn about us, initially. I mean we are the route whereby they can gain a qualification. And when we show them the materials and talk to them about the course and talk to them about how it works, and talk to them about how it's 100% routed in their *practice*, and they don't have to write essays on educational theory -all they get to do is teach, think about teaching, use the literature to develop ideas for teaching better. In other words as long as we bang on about it being a totally *practice-based* course -informed by theory, but practice-based -then the enthusiasm grows, and they get quite keen, because they know it will help them in the rest of their lives.'

Within the Professional Competence orientation the role of theory is subjugated firmly to being the handmaiden of practice.

'And it ties..it gets the theory in its place. Practice first. I guess we're eclectic, but I think that model [Kolb's experiential learning cycle] is probably the most powerful and important one for us. Because it says things about appropriate uses of theory. Because you can use theory to test

and evaluate practice. And of course you can use practice to test and evaluate theory. I'm not saying theory's always right. It provides a way in which they can make useful sense of theory. It provides a way in which they can see it as tools for thinking and doing rather than as boring old stuff to be learned, and I'd rather be getting on with my teaching thank you very much.'

As Gosling (1997) has pointed out, a further salient characteristic of this orientation is its strong sense of obligation towards the student body as primary stakeholders in the higher education enterprise.

8 Reflective Practitioner

There is a degree of complexity within professional practice that is not easily susceptible to a direct technical-rational treatment. Many educational developers engage in the planning of initiatives or the introduction of innovations in their organisations and clearly such measures cannot be undertaken without systematic planning. Yet however meticulously they might seek to design and implement their projects they find them influenced by unpredictable and often unique factors. The experience of respondents suggests that the process of development tends to be altogether less systematic and logically coherent than rational accounts would indicate. It is often messy, disorganised, iterative and conflicted. It often leads to uncertainty, anxiety, ambivalence and doubt, particularly when there is no explicit system of values to guide the planning. Developers of this orientation *problematise* their own practice. Emphasis is placed on the ability to 'read the situation' in development settings.

> 'I suppose you could say the skill, the *expertise* of academic developers rests very much on their capacity to analyse the situation, make judgements about it and come to a decision concerning what will be the most appropriate action. We rarely have any firm and agreed guidelines. We're usually in uncertain situations (every situation's more or less new, a one-off), sometimes scared stiff, and I suppose we test the *validity* of our decisions by ..through critical reflection, you know, Schön and company, Kolb, the old reflective practice bit, and by reference to and consultation with our peers. And it's in this way, I suppose, that we become self-evaluating practitioners and learn to have confidence in our own professional judgements and values.'

9 Internal Consultant

Certain developers see themselves operating more as internal consultants in their organisations and here the predominant operational focus is with specific departments or course teams (or individuals within those departments and teams). Such developers stress that effective internal consultancy is not a reactive process but essentially a *proactive* strategy of making things happen. It can be a useful means of infiltrating departments.

> 'Effective consultancy usually comes about through the contacts, the networking you do. You've got to put yourself about a bit, get known, seed some interesting ideas around the place to get others interested. You have to let them know who you are, of course, and what you can do, what you can offer. Got to drum up a bit of business. You have to be a bit *promiscuous* I suppose.' *(laughs).*

Another developer emphasises the need for credibility and for offering practical solutions.

> 'An educational developer has got to have good consultancy skills of being able to listen and identify the needs. But a consultant wouldn't be employed if all they do is listen. You would have to come up with solutions - credible, *workable* solutions - based on experience. That may be a risk at times, but you know from working with those particular people they are prepared to take the risk.'

However this is not a question of going in telling people what to do. It is a much more tentative process of collaborative discussion and 'reflecting back.' The emergent understandings are then fed back through a process of 'mirroring'. The consultant's expertise stems from familiarity with a knowledge base of relevant research.

> 'But you try to make something and then when you run the workshop that they've asked you to run you just feed back what's happening in their environment. You hold a mirror up and you say "This is what is happening and this is what the research says. Is there anything there that you think you could use?" You have to not be judgemental.. you have to kind of reflect back what's happening from their point of view and maybe that's why often a stimulus for change in this institution is an evaluation of a course. I do a lot of evaluations where I go in and I just work with the students on a kind of pyramid discussion type of procedure where I then write a report which is student perceptions of, say, electrical engineering.'

10 Modeller-broker

Whilst some developers, as we have seen, are hesitant to be seen as overly directive in their relations with colleagues, others feel it is appropriate to direct colleagues to exemplars of effective teaching and learning.

> 'Doing work with particular people who are interested ..you know, departments who are interested, and just trying to drive that forward because they've become exemplars that you can attract other people to, and doing these sorts of things, and that's a deliberate strategy.'

We recall our predatory opportunist mentioned earlier, alighting 'raven-like' on shiny substances, but we note, too, that what was seized upon was then modelled for the benefit of others:

> '..and if it's really nice you kind of fly off with it *and show it to as many people as you think might be interested or something.*'

As well as exploiting the use of exemplars, developers of this orientation often model their own practice directly to colleagues. The emphasis is on active involvement, rolling the educational sleeves up and getting developmental hands dirty, 'doing as I do' rather than 'doing as I say'.

> 'I think we actually are the "brown knees brigade", ie. we put our shorts on and we get out there and we go in and we do things. That's obviously limited by how few we are, and what we can do, but we do actually go in and support and encourage and work with people. And I think it's true to say - and I don't think this is vanity - that our reputation is such that people trust us. So we can press for change on that level.'

For many developers, most of whom, of course, have been mainstream teachers earlier in their careers, this is an attractive way of working:

> 'I adore actually doing it. I love getting into a workshop environment with people and helping them to think about how they might develop their practice. So whatever the topic is, I love working with people in that sort of way. I like the individual consultations as well but not as much, I have to say, as working in groups.'

A belief in the efficacy of modelling and brokerage is seen by some experienced practitioners as ultimately a more effective operational approach than the patient development and implementation of policy.

> 'I think probably in my first couple of years here I was a bit too confident about the value of policies and guidelines and putting them through committees and

then somehow thinking that would influence people. I've become much more sceptical about those although that's not to say occasionally we don't still do that. I mean our student feedback policy was an example; we did that last year. But I think we work much more effectively by working with departments we know are active, then try to get some examples out to other people. They see that it works and then we try to bring them on board.'

11 Interpretive-hermeneutic

Perhaps the most sophisticated and radical orientation of educational development practice is that associated with the philosophical tradition of hermeneutics. The hermeneutical tradition of 'understanding' *(Verstehen)* can be characterised, in its simplest form, as 'a conversational kind of process in which the interpreter learns by adjusting his or her perspective. It necessitates entry to the inner world of the thing or person to be understood - the "other"'. (Webb, 1996:66).

Hermeneutics is the branch of knowledge concerned with attempts to interpret human activities, to reach an *understanding* of them. Its application to educational development has been most closely associated with the work of Graham Webb. (Webb, 1993, 1996). He takes issue with the 'bipolar', 'hierarchical, linear and causal' nature of much educational theorising, citing such hierarchical knowledge constructions as Bloom's taxonomy, or procedural linearities within staff development such as teaching observation → diagnosis → formulation of new strategy. The insights gained from the moving back and forth between part and whole that are characteristic of the hermeneutical circle allow 'a somewhat different view'.

As learners we may be both one thing and another, constantly moving between positions. In order to gain a global understanding of a concept, we may have to reduce it to its elements, label it, take it apart, and analyse it. As we do this we learn more about the element, but also gain a new perspective on the whole concept. Alternatively we might make a single intuitive leap to a grasp of the concept as a whole, perhaps through the application of a metaphor or analogy from elsewhere. We are then better able to locate and appreciate a particular element within the overall concept. (Webb, 1996:66)

It does not matter, suggests Webb, when or where one enters a 'circle of understanding'. What is paramount is 'the subtlety of the relationship and the constant shifting of position between part and whole'. This kind of conceptual and emotional 'shifting' is a recurrent feature within the relationships in which educational developers engage. It is a feature of the way they translate theory into practice and vice-versa and of the dialogues which they enter with colleagues. This approach is reflected in the experience of certain respondents in this study.

'For me the key issue is about how educators come to judgements, The key function is the socio-cultural process by which they come to - or fail to come to! - working agreements on judgements. This is not a matter of simply "applying" pre-defined criteria and "scientific" procedures. We need to try and understand what *shared* judgemental processes might involve - positively involve - in academic life.'

This respondent argues that there needs to be 'a reconceptualisation of academic practices'.

'I mean look at assessment practices. We can all troop out marking schemes and lists of grade-related criteria, credit ratings, all that stuff managers like. But we all know, as well, that, when implemented, these things are much more qualitatively derived. We need to know more about the ways in which qualitative criteria are articulated and used within communities of practice. I think we get a better understanding of these things through intelligent conversations here and there between interested and well-disposed colleagues. I think good educational development is more a mutually developmental process.'

Such views are predicated on the notion that multiple criteria can never be mechanically 'applied' in complex real world situations, and rather that in such situations the interpretive and/or negotiated nature of their use is crucial. This implies inter-subjectivity and shared values. In terms of institutional implications the strength of this orientation, like the romantic orientation, lies more in terms of its impact at local level than any presence. In terms of its operational aspects it requires particular interpersonal skills and a high degree of communicative competence. It is essentially 'unscripted', though not unplanned, and relies on intuitive understandings and 'thinking on one's feet'. Another respondent, using a chess analogy, sees the skills required in this dialogic process as being to 'unblock', to 'open up spaces' and use resources to the maximum.

'The role certainly does involve developing people, really, but development is strange. Do you play chess? You know that "development" in chess involves arranging your pieces so that the big pieces can use their resources to the maximum. So your bishop isn't blocked on this diagonal. So you open things up really. So I see development as "opening up" so that people's potential could be fully realised. You haven't got this powerful queen... you don't want to move really. Open spaces really. Of course the point is when you've opened it up the queen can go straight, left, all sorts of places. It just doesn't open up one single channel which is pre-determined as the queen's route. It means that the queen is able then to go in five different directions, backwards even. It's an unblocking. Yes, well not a bad analogy .. A lot of people are actually just blocked really, and for various reasons, and if you can open it up, open the spaces...'

12 Discipline-specific

The final orientation to emerge from the research data is a somewhat different and more recent category. This relates to practitioners working within specific subjects or disciplines to develop practices of teaching and learning related to that discipline. One head of an EDU has a specific managerial remit to run a 'task force' to foster discipline-specific development within departments:

'I have 26 half-time seconded people. They're seconded for two or three years so they're a big substantial project. They are change agents inside the subject area. They are the spokes. I manage that project. My job really is to make more out of that than just a series of projects. They've all got individual projects which are subject-based. I'm increasingly trying to push them towards staff development inside the subject area and working together on thematic issues. They are quite a powerful group.'

Recent developments at national level in UK higher education have attempted to translate discipline-specific educational development into tangible realities. The substantial Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) was established by HEFCE and DENI to promote and disseminate projects based on aspects of good practice recognised within specific disciplinary areas during the TQA exercise. Project funding was made available to departments gaining excellence ratings in the TQA. More recently the Subject Centres of the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) have been established. A developer involved in the management of one such large national project describes these national drives towards discipline-specific development as 'more "needs-pulled" rather than "good idea-pushed"'. She describes the new kind of practitioner becoming involved in discipline-specific development:

'They are enthusiastic teachers who run the projects but that doesn't necessarily mean that the whole culture of that department is interested in educational development. It certainly doesn't mean the subject is. So they've got quite a big job to do. They could be some of the next generation of educational developers.'

This developer is committed to the notion of discipline-specific development, but is also conscious of the need to avoid 'ghettoisation':

'We believe that it's really important that development is owned within the disciplines. And that's been a really important strand of our project. However we also know that if you just, as it were, "ghettoised" it, we'd lose a lot of the benefit. So we have a difficult balance between saying to the *Music* projects "Yes, this is a Music project; it's about learning in Music" and 'Hang on a minute, a lot of those things you do with one-to-one instrumental teaching might be very similar to the stuff that people do in Art and Design by doing one-to-one studio work." It's not making them all go generic because what would happen then is we would lose that ownership that people need. So it's not *invention* but it's innovation - taking ideas and adapting them and working with them in your own sector.'

A fuller account of this study of orientations to educational development will be forthcoming later in the year in which a model will be presented mapping the orientations against organisational forms and cultures (eg. hierarchical, collegial, anarchic, political), against perceptions and metaphors of organisational change and against the various stakeholder groups which educational development serves.

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Sri Lankan Diary

Professor Liz Beaty FSEDA

Director of the Centre for Higher Education Development, Coventry University

Saturday

This was my third visit to the University of Colombo as external examiner for their SEDA recognised programme. It is midday as I am driven from the airport and the familiar sights and sounds of this lovely country assault my senses; tall palm trees, fragrant flowers, the chaotic traffic mixing with people, dogs and oxen, and especially the incessant honking of car horns. I have the day to recover, including a swim in the hotel's outdoor pool. It is difficult to decide whether it is warmer in or out of the water but the air-conditioning in the bedroom is welcome and I sleep.

Sunday

I discuss developments in the course with Professor Suki Ekaratne, the Director of Staff Development, and we go in to the University Campus to collect the inevitable portfolios. I am pleased to escape from the hotel with its airconned international standard into the warmth and vitality of Colombo. The Staff Development Centre is housed in the Vice Chancellors building; a lovely old house with green glass windows and dark oak panelled walls. We choose four portfolios and I spend the remainder of the day and much of the sleepless night reading them.

Monday

A second day with the remaining portfolios. I am fascinated by their variety. The range of depth and coverage is familiar from any SEDA course but the context is quite different. When a reflective diary begins "My country is at war ....." - its contents take on a completely new meaning. We discuss aspects of the assessment and issues in some of the portfolios and I am happy that I have enough insight to write my report. In this third year, the programme is showing maturity and more consistent standards. The groundwork, by Stephen Cox as consultant and first course leader, has been embedded by Suki who has made the leap from Professor of Zoology to staff developer with remarkable agility.

Tuesday

The first of two workshops for senior staff on teaching and learning strategy and course design. I am taking a risk in using a new exercise which I devised only last week. It involves lots of coloured cards and asks groups of participants to match their learning outcomes to teaching, learning and assessment methods. This was inspired by John Biggs' concept of constructive alignment (Biggs (1999) *Teaching for Quality Learning in University.* SRHE/Open University Press), and thankfully it goes well. The participants have come from many different Universities in Sri Lanka, the furthest from Jaffna where the fighting between Tamil Tigers and the army is currently going on. Here in Colombo there are many army check points but it is easy to ignore them and to feel perfectly safe.

Wednesday

A day off and I have the privilege of entering Suki's other world. We swim in the Indian Ocean and watch the colourful fish and corals for most of the morning. I decide by the end of the day that this side of his work is even more important than staff development. The corals are vastly depleted due to El Nino and global warming. The task of conserving the remainder is an imperative for bio diversity in the region. The politics and poverty of the people make it very difficult to stop harmful fishing methods and requires the skills of a community worker as well as the science of an expert ecologist. I begin to understand some of Suki's natural talent in staff development -the skills are clearly transferable.

Thursday

Back in Colombo for a second workshop, this time on Reflective Practice. Again I am pleased when the workshop exercises are well received. Consultancy in unfamiliar contexts can be quite scary. Will the material be relevant? Will the pace and depth be appropriate? Reading the body language in a different cultural context is also unnerving. I am used to being able to adjust to cues in an unconscious way. Here, what I observe as the natural politeness of people makes this more difficult. I am relieved to get the post workshop feedback and find that it compares favourably with other workshops.

Friday

Back home with much to think about on the plane. What have I learnt? Much more than I expected - about the importance of values, the value of people and how crucial is education to the world.

SEDA Spring Conference 2000 'Reaching Out'

10 -12 April 2000
The TechnoCentre, Coventry University

The title of the conference was very apposite in terms of the breadth of participants it attracted. The Senior Pro-Vice Chancellor of Coventry University, Professor Gareth Thomas, welcomed over 120 delegates from a range of UK institutions as well as from Turkey, Australia, Sweden, Sri Lanka, New Zealand and Malaysia. For the majority of participants this was their first SEDA Conference; judging by their conference evaluations it won't be their last.

Rakesh Bhanot, SEDA Conference Committee Chair, said the conference themes 'sought to capture and harness a number of innovative strands and strategies within the sector of post-compulsory education'. In this respect the Conference was an undoubted success. The range of workshops and seminar presentations was rich and diverse and as usual it was difficult to choose which ones to attend. My own choices included 'Making the Curriculum Inclusive' led by Bob Matthews and Pete Sayers; 'Widening Participation for Muslim Women' led by Fatemeh Rabiee and David Thompson, and 'Supporting Key Skills on the Web' led by Sue Drew. During the conference we learned about the WebCT initiative at Coventry University through a series of excellent demonstrations.

Interestingly Machiavelli was referred to in two of the keynote presentations with reference made to the innovator making enemies of all those who prosper in the old order. With both Professor Paul Ramsden and Lord Ron Dearing invoking 'The Prince' it was pretty clear what our follow-up reading should be. I've already ordered my copy. Paul Ramsden emphasised the need for clear strategic planning and implementation, and transformational leadership; he said that staff and educational development cannot progress 'on a wing and a prayer' but must make a business case and plan accordingly. He left delegates in no doubt of his conviction that the higher education sector is, and will be, characterised by radical change with a major driver being the new information and communications technologies.

Professor Freda Tallantyre's keynote address certainly lived up to its title 'Tearing Down the Walls: widening participation'. She deftly took us through developments in higher education over the last fifty years including the 'chinks in the wall' made by access courses to the empowering of the learner through the concept of borderless education.

For me it was a great conference. A highlight was meeting a former student, now a university researcher soon to complete his doctorate. He led one of the oversubscribed conference workshops. When we last met he was a student on an access course; now that's 'reaching out'.

Dr Kristine Mason O'Connor
Cheltenham and Gloucester College of HE

Forthcoming articles:

A Developers' Guide to National Initiatives
Part 2 of Carole and David Baume's guide through the alphabet soup of national initiatives

Reflecting on Innovating the Academic Architecture for the 21st Century: A Singapore Perspective
Tan Oon Seng, Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore

Articles which appeared in issue 1.1 (January 2000):

Learning and Teaching Strategies: the implications for educational development
Professor Graham Gibbs, The Open University

When Good Teaching Becomes Outstanding
Dr Brian Smith, University of Sussex

Thirteen Tips for the Successful Supervision of Under-Graduate Dissertations
Professor Jennifer Rowley, Edge Hill College

Information for Contributors

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

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

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

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

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

Articles

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

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

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

Reviews

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

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

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