

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

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



Issue 12.3

September 2011 ISSN 1469-3267

£8.50 Cover price (UK only)

Contents

- 1 **How Does Academic Development Make a Difference in the 21st Century University?**
Lorraine Stefani
- 6 **Come and walk with me? I will take you by the hand. I see you dancing!**
Sarah Hall and Julie Hall
- 9 **The personal tutor system: any questions?** Debbie McVitty
- 11 **The Future of CPD for Professional Staff ...** Jan Shine and Alison Robinson Canham
- 15 **The SEDA May Conference in Edinburgh**
Celia Popovic and Fiona Campbell
- 16 **Please do not defer....**
Paula Stone
- 19 **Book Review**
- 20 **International community volunteering: Re-visiting Kolb in search of the authentic learning experience**
Viv Caruana
- 23 **Open Educational Resources and Practices for All**
Chrissi Nerantzi
- 25 **The Changing Face of Feedback – how staff are using media-enhanced feedback**
Andrew Middleton
- 28 **Book Review**
- 28 **SEDA News**

SEDA Ltd

Woburn House,
20 - 24 Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9HF
Tel 020 7380 6767
Fax 020 7387 2655
Email office@seda.ac.uk

More information about SEDA's activities can be found on our website:

www.seda.ac.uk

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

How Does Academic Development Make a Difference in the 21st Century University?

Lorraine Stefani, University of Auckland

The SEDA Spring Conference held in Edinburgh on 5-6 May was a delightful event. The setting for the conference could not have been better. As someone who (e)migrated to the Southern Hemisphere almost eight years ago, it was wonderful to meet up again with colleagues from the UK and beyond and to meet new rising stars in the field of academic development.

It was truly an honour to be asked to give the closing keynote, albeit this was a strenuous task: to leave the conference participants feeling uplifted at a time of great change in the UK Higher Education sector, a time when academic developers need more than ever to be able to articulate their value to their institutions.

The purpose of this article is to provide readers of *Educational Developments*, members of the ever-growing SEDA community and others who could not be present at the Spring Conference, with an overview of the key points of my presentation.

I used the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) at the University of Auckland as a background to my talk partly because it is one of the largest Centres of its type in Australasia with between 50 and 60 staff members, and also because the middle section of the book I recently edited on the evaluation of the effectiveness of academic development (Stefani, 2010) comprises case studies of evaluative practice written by staff members within CAD. The issue of evaluation of our effectiveness and added value to our institutions is critical to our survival as a profession in this time of economic restraint, when all activities within our institutions are coming under increasing scrutiny.

The points I attempted to respond to in my presentation are as follows:

- Is there a case for a change of narrative for academic developers in the 21st century?
- Should academic developers focus their energies on overarching, whole of institution development projects?
- Do our strategies for evaluating the effectiveness of academic development enable us to respond to the question: How does academic development make a difference to the organisation?

SEDA Supporting and Leading Educational Change

Editorial Committee

Fran Beaton

University of Kent

Professor Anthony Brand

Independent Educational Consultant

Dr Vivienne Caruana

Leeds Metropolitan University

Dr Helen Gale

University of Wolverhampton

Elizabeth Grant

University College London

Debby McVitty

National Union of Students

Steve Outram

The Higher Education Academy

Anne Oxley

Independent Educational Consultant

Dr David Ross

University of the West of Scotland

**Professor Lorraine Stefani
FSEDA**

Auckland University, NZ

Professor James Wisdom

Higher Education Consultant

2011 (Vol.12)

Annual Subscription Rates

Individual subscriptions are £34 sterling per year (4 issues) within the UK. Overseas subscribers should add £5 sterling postage and packing for delivery within the EU or £8 sterling for the rest of the world.

Packs of 10 copies (each copy containing 4 issues) are available for £260 sterling.

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

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

The following diagram shows the organisational structure and complexity of CAD:

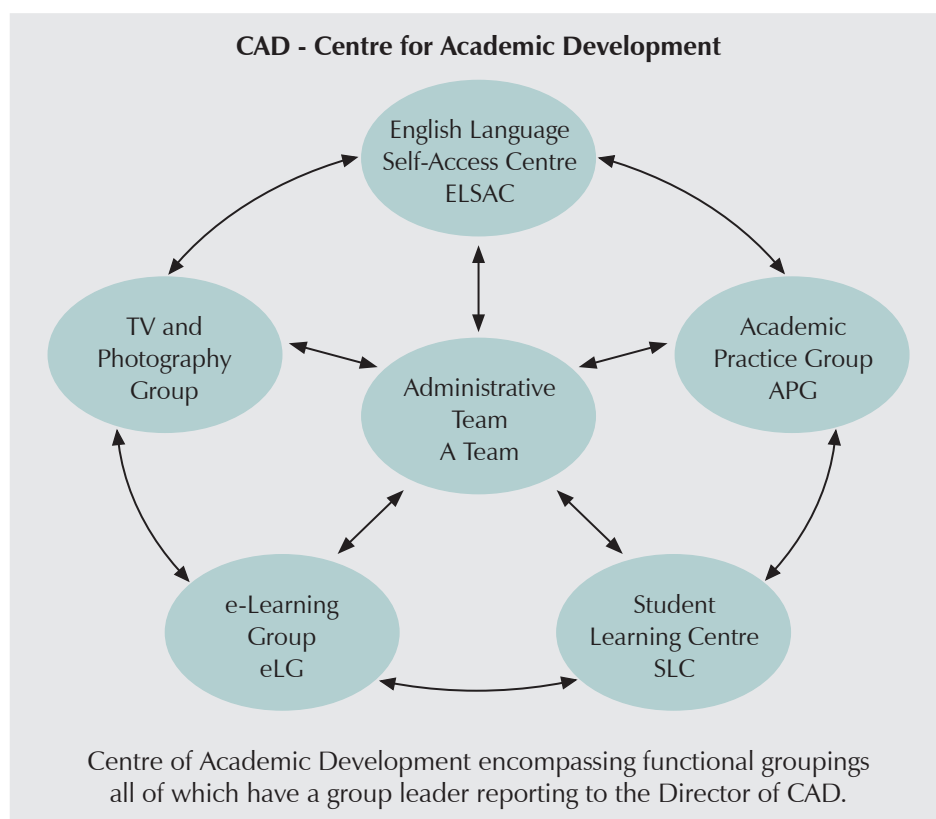


Figure 1 Structure of CAD

Having a Centre as large as CAD with staff from quite different development remits – and most certainly different orientations to academic development – could be seen as something of a challenge. The organisational structure was a device which allowed for a distributed leadership model of management. CAD was formed through an amalgamation of three previously autonomous and independent Centres, namely the Centre for Professional Development, the Student Learning Centre and the Centre for Flexible and Distance Learning, and one Centre which had previously been under the management of the University Library: ELSAC, the English Language Self-Access Centre.

Organising the Centre into functional teams provided an opportunity to build leadership capacity within CAD, and for the team leaders to build leadership capacity within their own groups. The future of academic development will depend on robust, strategic leadership whether that is within Centres like CAD or whether it is within our professional bodies, SEDA, HEA, ALTC (if it survives the budget cuts in Australia!) and Ako Aotearoa (the Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence) in NZ, to name but a few key organisations.

Like many research-intensive universities, the University of Auckland views academic development as a necessity, given the NZ government's emphasis on a quality learning experience for all students, but as an organisation it struggles to accept academic development as being central to its achieving its strategic goals. This is a twenty-first-century challenge for academic development – to find its narrative, to be understood as being central to the mission of our institutions.

The intention in presenting the following cameos of the work of CAD is to highlight how we have gradually shifted our narrative to better reflect our role as influencers, leaders and organisational change agents.

Firstly, in CAD we present very few generic workshops. The reason for this is low 'return on investment'. While a few staff may gain value from being participants in a generic workshop, it is immensely difficult to determine added value and anecdotal

evidence informs us that individuals find it difficult to effect meaningful change within a department. Liaising with Heads of Department and working within and in partnership with a critical mass of discipline-based staff, on matters relating to the curriculum and learning and teaching, provide the opportunity for meaningful, sustainable change to occur. Each member of the CAD Academic Practice Group is assigned to one or more Faculties, and where possible they engage with the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees. In this way we share our expertise and influence the learning and teaching agenda as appropriate within the Faculties. Carrying out our development activities in this manner has increased our visibility across the University. We offer one-to-one consultancy with academic staff members, offering advice, support and peer observation of teaching etc.

In common with most academic development centres, CAD presents the University of Auckland Introduction to Teaching Programme and a postgraduate Certificate Programme (PGCert Academic Practice). In her case study included in 'Evaluating the Effectiveness of Academic Development' (Stefani, 2010), Helen Sword outlines how she and her group have developed a novel research methodology, 'longitudinal archiving'. Sword (2010, p. 128) describes the 'longitudinal archive' as 'housing a body of materials (both physical and electronic) that have been collected with the express purpose of documenting institutional change over a long period of time'. Briefly, we are tracking and documenting (with permission) the achievements of our community of practice members – their teaching-related discipline-based publications, who is successful in their applications for Teaching Excellence Awards, Teaching Improvement Grant award winners, recognition through enhanced roles and responsibilities in their Departments and Faculties.

Over time, we will be able to ask more complex questions relating to our influence on organisational change through the continuous development of this archive.

The archive provides a 'story', a narrative of success, added value and leadership capacity building across the University. Our articulated purpose for offering the Postgraduate Certificate Programme is to build leadership capacity across the institution in Learning and Teaching.

An important point about our Certificate modules is that we cover learning and teaching, research capability building and academic citizenship in the programme. The modules we offer through the programme resonate with and relate to the complex role of an academic.

We are also carrying out evaluative research on participants' perspectives and reflections on our three-day Introduction to Teaching and Learning programme and on the one-to-one staff consultations we offer. Researching our practice in this way enables us to show the tangible benefits of our work.

CAD supports the institutional research agenda in multiple ways. One way is through our Doctoral Skills Programme run jointly between the School of Graduate Studies, CAD, the

Library and the Careers Office. This programme comprises a mandatory introductory/orientation session for all new PhD students. The mandatory sessions cover topics such as: the University of Auckland research environment, the PhD support structures, and who's who across the University in research positions, funding mechanisms etc. This is followed by a menu of tailored seminars and workshops with inputs from top researchers and the university Research Office. PhD students can choose from this menu of opportunities. The programme also provides a means of developing research communities of practice. Participants value the opportunity to meet their fellow PhD students from different disciplines.

This programme is an example of a collaborative project that brings enormous visibility for CAD staff and tangible outcomes which matter to the university. A longitudinal evaluative study is planned. The building of formal collaborations with other units and Centres and working *intentionally* in partnership with academic staff from across the university are a way of sharing and spreading resource. Encouraging CAD staff to take a leading role in such programmes is developmental for them and ensures they are not swamped by the multiple agencies involved in such high-profile projects.

The evaluation of the Doctoral Skills Programme became a research project in itself, and has resulted in publications in high-profile journals. A case study of the evaluation of this programme was published by Kelly, Brailsford and Carter (2010).

CAD staff also facilitate a mandatory Research Supervision Programme for all new supervisors and an update programme for experienced supervisors.

The University has the ambitious goal of achieving 800 Masters level completions and 500 PhD completions by 2012. Although the goal may be too high to achieve, the University has taken great strides forward in providing an excellent research environment and professional development opportunities for graduate students and for supervisors and CAD plays a significant role in this institutional strategic priority. What the University has achieved is a significant increase in timely completions and enhanced levels of student satisfaction. Barbara Grant has published the evaluation strategy she uses for these programmes in her case study 'Evaluation as Bricolage' (Grant, 2010).

The focus of our activities is 'adding value' to the institution, showing tangible outcomes where possible, leadership capacity building and evaluative research.

A recent publication by Schroeder adds weight to the stance we are taking (Schroeder, 2010). The premise of Schroeder's work is that, to bring academic development in from the margins, we need to establish a robust link between Academic Development activities and interventions and sustainable organisational change and development. We must also demonstrate sufficient agility to adapt to changing institutional expectations.

Many academic developers will be discomfited by the idea of strategic alignment with institutional priorities and feel that this puts us in the position of doing the bidding of senior management. However, the focus on influencing the institutional agenda and taking the lead is actually quite far removed from seeing ourselves in the role of 'servants' to the institution.

Moving to the question: Should academic developers focus their energies on overarching whole-institution development projects?

I pose this question on the basis of a close reading of the work of Kerri-Lee Krause, who is renowned for her long-term studies on Student Survey Data. Student Surveys are a 'hot topic' at the moment especially within the UK, given some of the recommendations of the recent Browne Report (2010). Krause (2010) examines ways in which student survey data may be used to shape the priorities and approaches of academic development units and their work.

There is no shortage of high-level drivers relating to value for money in higher education. These drivers include: student retention, attainment and progression; integrating and embedding technologies; dealing with a diverse, increasingly international student population; and community engagement. It is not unreasonable for a university to expect its academic development centre to be engaging with these overarching themes.

As Krause indicates, the data sets from the National Student Survey, the National Survey of Student Engagement, the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement etc. 'represent a rich source of information for academic developers charged with the responsibility of working with colleagues to enhance the quality of learning, teaching, assessment and curriculum design...Evaluative data in the form of the student voice offer a rich vein of information to guide strategic approaches to academic development' (Krause, 2010, p. 59).

There is an abundance of anecdotal evidence that HE institutions are not especially adept at analysing student survey data. There is something of a tendency to scour through the data and look for the parts where we gain a high score and we clap ourselves on the back for doing so well! We compare ourselves with others and say, look, we did better on group work (or some such factor) than other universities. We approach the data in a piecemeal way.

We lack the sophisticated skills to interpret the data and take a holistic approach to responding to what students are telling us year after year. What Krause argues for is:

'a systems approach to interpreting how student survey data can and should be used to build synergies between and among elements of the university in order to bring about sustainable change and improvement in learning, teaching and student outcomes.' (Krause, 2010, p. 61)

Should academic developers reposition themselves in this

way? Should we be putting ourselves firmly in the centre of the institutional radar screen?

'Student surveys remain somewhat contested particularly if used for competitive funding purposes but they are helpful in exploring the real experiences of and outcomes for students.'

'As major agencies for change in universities, Academic Development Centres can be critical forces for influencing student learning outcomes and ensuring the attainment of a high quality educational experience.' (Krause, 2010, p. 63)

Carolyn Kreber has a different slant on the shifting narrative of Academic Development. In Kreber (2010) she explores:

'How, in the context of various, often conflicting agendas and expectations, we might conceive of the overarching purposes of Academic Development and what we might look for to satisfy ourselves and others that our work is worthwhile or "fit for purpose".' (Kreber, 2010, p. 45)

Here we are in essence being invited to explore what is it that we are evaluating – what is Academic Development?

In an erudite exploration of what it means to teach, examining teaching through the lenses of authenticity and phronesis, Kreber offers an approach to evaluation that focuses on the processes of teaching, the processes of our academic development activities. This would be a radical shift away from our current obsession with outcomes.

It appears to be the case that a number of scholars share the view that there is a need to shift our narrative, to articulate better what we do and how we contribute to sustainable change within our institutions.

Whatever direction we take as a profession in the near to medium term, much will depend on the quality of leadership in academic development. While I mean leadership in general, I also mean leadership of academic development centres.

Many Academic Development centres are closed down or disestablished, apparently at the whim of a new, incoming senior manager. Is this really the case or do we need to think a little deeper than that? In New Zealand, we have the concept of the 'too hard basket'. Sometimes the matter of closing down or disestablishing a Centre or having a major restructure somewhere in the university has been put into the 'too hard basket' by a current incumbent of a senior position, but these 'too hard basket' items often find their way to the top of the 'to do' pile for new managers.

It is quite likely that other factors contribute to close down or disestablishment of our Centres, and it may be the case that we need to re-examine what type of leadership we are actually providing in enabling the institution to achieve its strategic goals.

In a recent chapter entitled 'Sustaining and Championing Teaching in Good Times and Bad', Debowski *et al.* (2011) drew up a list of the particular capabilities leaders in academic development need in order to navigate the profession through these complex times:

- *Establish high credibility as a knowledgeable expert*
Leaders need to establish their credibility as a key source of knowledge on matters relating to teaching and learning. This credibility can be assisted by building a wide sphere of influence, expanding one's own skills in leadership and anticipating emerging teaching and learning issues that may be relevant to the university. The leader of an academic development unit needs to influence senior management on what shifts would best enable the institution to achieve its goals of teaching and learning excellence.
- *Be flexible and adaptive*
A risk for academic developers is that they remain attached to the practices and methodologies that have been successful in the past. The shifting context for higher education requires adaptive responses in terms of strategy, practices and tactics as the environment alters (Tennant, McMullen and Kaczynski, 2009). A stronger focus on institutional change and capacity building is also likely to be a major area of growth, as shown by Schroeder's research (2010).
- *Build strong partnerships with significant leaders*
Universities are political places, particularly when resources are tight and the stakes become larger. Academic developers need to build strong partnerships with a range of leaders – at executive, Dean and Head level. These collaborations ensure they are in tune with the prevailing needs of the institution, and that they have a number of sponsors across the community.
- *Focus on the strategic needs of the university*
While academic development centres need to maintain their high quality educational programmes and established services, they must also operate at a strategic level (Chism, 2010). Despite burgeoning workloads, it is fatal to solely focus on the daily operations. The centre needs to be positioned as an influencing force that is enabling effective growth and development of the teaching function across the university, and in guiding future educational strategy. As a first step, this means maintaining a strong focus on the initiatives being developed within the university and sourcing new ideas for additional strategies (including those in place in other universities).
- *Develop established credibility within your broader profession*
Another risk for academic developers occurs if they are invisible and under-valued in their professional community. Engagement with the broader professional community confirms the worth of the individual and highlights the esteem in which they are held. It is valuable to contribute to the broader profession as it brings fresh perspectives back into the university and

provides opportunities to be recognised more widely within the sector.

It is not for me to answer on behalf of all academic developers the question: *How does academic development contribute to sustainable organisational change within your institution?*

What this article, and the keynote it was based on, has been about can be summed up in the following points:

- It is a plea for a consistent and coherent narrative for the profession of academic development in the 21st century
- A suggestion that we need to carry out much more evaluative research to evidence our added value
- A call to arms to influence more strongly the strategic direction of our institutions
- A call for us to consider and to better articulate how we contribute to sustainable organisational change and development in our institutions.

My final message to the conference participants and those who read this article is to go forward with confidence and be a force to be reckoned with within your institutions.

References

- Browne Report (2010) 'Securing a sustainable future for higher education' (tinyurl.com/43pkpnl, accessed 5 June 2011)
- Chism, N. V. N. (2010) 'Getting to the table: planning and developing institutional initiatives', in Schroeder, C. M. (ed.) *Coming in from the Margins: faculty development's emerging organisational development role in institutional change*, Sterling VA, Stylus, pp. 47-59.
- Debowski, S., Stefani, L., Cohen, M. and Ho, A. (2011) 'Sustaining and championing teaching and learning in good times or bad', in Groccia, J., Alsudairi, M. and Buskist, B. (eds.) *A Handbook of College and University Teaching: global perspectives*, Sage Publications, in press.
- Grant, B. M. (2010) 'Evaluation as bricolage: cobbling together a strategy for appraising supervision development', in Stefani, L., *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Academic Development: principles and practice*, Routledge, London.
- Kelly, F., Brailsford, I. and Carter, S. (2010) 'Tending the secret garden: evaluating a doctoral skills programme', in Stefani, L., *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Academic Development: principles and practice*, Routledge, London.
- Krause, K-L. (2010) 'Using student survey data to shape priorities and approaches', in Stefani, L., *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Academic Development: principles and practice*, Routledge, London.
- Kreber, C. (2010) 'Demonstrating fitness for purpose: phronesis and authenticity as overarching purposes', in Stefani, L., *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Academic Development: principles and practice*, Routledge, London.
- Schroeder, C. M. (2010) (ed.) *Coming in from the Margins: faculty development's emerging organisational development role in institutional change*, Sterling VA, Stylus.
- Stefani, L. (2010) *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Academic Development: principles and practice*, Routledge, London.
- Sword, H. (2010) 'Archiving for the future: a longitudinal approach to evaluating a postgraduate certificate programme', in Stefani, L., *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Academic Development: principles and practice*, Routledge, London.
- Tennant, M., McMullen, C. and Kaczynski, D. (2009) *Teaching, Learning and Research in Higher Education: a critical approach*, Routledge, London.
- Professor Lorraine Stefani** is the Director of the Centre for Academic Development at the University of Auckland.

Come and walk with me? I will take you by the hand. I see you dancing!

Sarah Hall and **Julie Hall**, Roehampton University

(The title is a haiku used by a participant to sum up her learning on a SEDA PDF certificate in Professional Practice)

Introduction

While there has been considerable interest in the impact of a changing policy environment on academic identities in higher education (Henkel, 2000; Becher and Trowler, 2001; Barnett, 2005), there has been much less research on the changing identities of professional or administrative staff. For a recent literature search, see Whitchurch, 2008.

This paper describes a pilot study, funded by a SEDA-managed JISC award (Work-with-IT) to provide a professional development programme for administrative staff at Roehampton University as part of a University restructuring plan. The programme was designed using the SEDA Professional Development Framework (PDF) and accredited as a SEDA Certificate in Professional Practice. The SEDA PDF was ideal as a vehicle for the JISC project as it offered a nationally recognised qualification for participants, while providing the flexibility to design a programme that reflected Roehampton University's needs. The beauty of the PDF framework is that it provides a template programme design that can easily be adapted and configured for local use while also providing a nationally recognised CPD certificate mapped onto SEDA values. From design to running the first course took less than six months, which ensured that the programme could be central to the change management project at the university.

The change management project recognised that the identities of administrative staff and their roles had shifted as a result of the reorganisation, and that a programme of carefully designed workshops linked to a

national award might provide a space to readjust, reflect and develop new skills. The evaluation of the pilot study indicates the value of providing such programmes at a time of considerable change. Participants reported that the programme, delivered jointly by the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit and the Assistant Registrars, gave them valuable insights into the national HE policy context and the student experience, enhanced their IT skills and provided an opportunity to develop as a team and gain in confidence.

Roehampton University restructured in May 2010, replacing four academic Schools with ten new academic departments. In parallel, the administrative support for academic programmes was restructured, moving to a centrally line-managed, professional team of administrative staff deployed within each department (the Academic Support team).

A review of working practices within the Schools and across the University identified a number of areas of duplication, complexity and inefficiency. One of the aims of the restructuring was to engineer improved processes and procedures, and enhance and develop management information systems.

In addition to the physical restructure of administration, the Academic Support team aimed for a cultural shift in team dynamics. Teams that administer academic programmes are no longer isolated entities within a School but are part of a larger team that aims to drive a more collaborative and consistent approach to programme administration across all departments. As part of this

cultural transition we need to ensure that appropriate and fit-for-purpose communication tools are used to create seamless information exchange within and between teams.

The strategy has been to create and develop a professional administrative team and appropriate work environments where the use of technology is integrated and not seen as 'additional' or superimposed. The aim is to challenge past working practices and exploit IT to bring about efficiencies, consistency of practice and qualitative improvements to service delivery. Furthermore, we aimed to instil the AUA professional code of conduct and SEDA values within the service delivery model. The JISC project, specifically the SEDA programme (Certificate in Professional Practice for University Administrators) that it funded, was designed to offer support through this process, build communities and enable staff to share lessons learned and capture good practice for others to replicate.

The SEDA PDF programme design

We used the SEDA PDF in Professional Practice as our backbone for the programme. To meet core and specialist outcomes all recipients will be able to:

- Identify their own professional development goals, directions or priorities
- Plan for their initial and/or continuing professional development
- Undertake appropriate development activities
- Review their development and their practice, and the relations between them.

Additionally, to meet specialist outcomes award recipients will be able to:

- Explain how their role supports the organisation's mission and appropriate strategies, including quality considerations
- Use their specialist knowledge and skills within the higher education context
- Use interpersonal and personal organisation and management skills
- Reflect on and plan to meet their own personal and continuing professional development needs and identify appropriate follow-up activity.

The programme ran over six 3-4 hour sessions, either as face-to-face meetings or online activities. The course was completed in a three-month period. The Moodle VLE was used for interactive sessions during the course.

Taught sessions were short (typically a half day, 9.30am-1pm), student centred and the majority of work was completed within each session. Feedback from participants indicated that there was a good balance of in-class work and discussion and online activities through Moodle. Staff commented that they did not feel 'bogged down by pressures of the course on top of everything else', but that 'the course struck a good balance that makes me better understand the pressures our students are facing when they come to University'.

Discussion forums were used for staff to contribute their opinions and experiences. This allowed staff to participate in a session at a time that suited them and fitted in around other work pressures. This also developed an online community of practice and illustrated how the academic support team could function virtually within the organisation. A number of rich IT solutions were born through online discussions using the Moodle discussion forum. As a result, online virtual meetings held within Moodle have been piloted as an alternative to face-to-face meetings during busy exam board periods, with staff contributing from across the academic departments.

For one of the activities, course participants were asked to reflect on a series of articles and papers that examined the role of the administrator within HE, the wider HE context, and the current challenges that the sector faces. These are referenced in the programme handbook. Initially participants found this very challenging but reflected that the activity was extremely valuable on completing the course. Celia Whitchurch's 2008 work, developed through Leadership Foundation research grants, was particularly well received.

The programme concluded with a one-day event where participants presented their action research, developed an action plan for future CPD and took part in a question and answer session with senior university staff.

We are planning an annual conference for University administrators to give an opportunity to reflect, review and champion new ways of working and innovative ideas and to continue developing the community of practice at Roehampton University.

Outcomes and Lessons Learned

Providing space for critical and reflective thinking

A key lesson is that developmental space must be provided within the change process for participants to:

- share concerns and build networks
- understand the rationale for change
- imagine new futures and develop the skills required.

Traditional notions of 'staff development' can focus on 'training' and 'skills' rather than professional transformation and development of communities of practice. The SEDA PDF programme provided a critical space in which to develop a new community of practice. Within this, participants could share information and communicate about the restructure and develop skills to enable new ways of working. All staff who participated in the course had gone through the redeployment

exercise and therefore their focus had previously been 'how is the change going to impact on me individually?', 'will I have a job at the end of this?'. The course widened their exposure to the bigger picture – what the HE sector is facing as a whole, and why Roehampton University had to change the way administration was structured and change the way it worked. It also allowed staff to have a safe place to express their concerns, fears and apprehensions and to realise that they were not alone in the way they were feeling. The Assistant Registrar and the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit planned the course as a central vehicle for community building and the development of new skills especially around 'professionalising' the administrative role and building capacity for more effective use of IT. Using Moodle as a resource for the course developed understanding of this new platform and introduced administrative staff to a key academic learning tool in the University.

The course allowed administrative staff who previously worked in different Schools, within different silos of practice, to come together for the first time and to begin to develop relationships and networks that were never previously possible. Their understanding of the reasons for change was enhanced as they learned from each other how widely practice differed between Schools and what the impact was on student experience.

Opportunities for new ways of working

Another key lesson is that such periods of change, while challenging, can provide important opportunities to introduce new ways of working. The Roehampton re-organisation was an ideal time to partner with the JISC 'Work-with-IT' project team to ensure that technology is embedded in revised working practices and is greater utilised for communication between virtual and disparate teams within the academic support structure, and more widely across the University. The Moodle forum, for example, provided opportunities to share good practice and develop new university-wide processes.

Timing

The timing of such courses is also critical and although the SEDA course was driven predominantly by the timescale of the Work-with-IT project, we acknowledged that we needed to work around peaks in administrative workload. The first session was in mid-April prior to the start of the exam period at Roehampton. This is one of the busiest times for administrators in departments and therefore there were some participants who could not continue with the course because of workload. We used Moodle VLE for interactive sessions during May/June as we were aware that administrators were unlikely to be able to give up a half day for a face-to-face session. This was well received by course participants and led to a real engagement with the Moodle site and content.

Course leaders

Another key lesson was that such courses need sensitivity and course leaders need to make the most of the flexibility offered by SEDA PDF. We had to adapt and modify planned sessions with the first cohort due to general feedback of stress – it was a very busy period for programme administration with the added stresses of the restructure becoming effective. Therefore we invited the University's Health and Wellbeing advisor to lead an activity on dealing with workplace stress during one session with the first cohort and introduced a study buddy scheme to provide informal peer mentoring. Staff who participated in the first course volunteered to run activities on subsequent courses as course leaders. This has resulted in a sustainable model for this programme.

Confidence in using IT

Included in each session was a Hints and Tips topic to build confidence with using IT: Demonstration of Moodle VLE; Demonstration of Department Community sites (MS Sharepoint application); Working with MS Outlook.

Feedback received from course delegates was positive for this aspect of the course. They felt more confident in using and exploring technology and consequently reported

that they have cascaded this new knowledge to other colleagues back in their departments.

Some early outcomes

- Increase in confidence and feelings of professionalism. One participant commented, 'For twenty years I have been the admin lady and now I feel like a professional'. One participant has recently been appointed to a promoted role. She tells us that she would never have felt able to apply for this role before the course and a direct result of the course was that it had taught her to reflect and self-evaluate. This led to her feeling more confident about herself and her skills. The staff member volunteered to present at the first session of the second cohort and told participants about her transformation.
- Demonstrating new Sharepoint sites during the course has meant that we have champions in the academic departments who are informed and can positively reinforce the change with colleagues.
- Developing a 'How To' guide for frequently used technology interfaces. We have developed a series of video clips designed to share software hints and tips and best practice. Staff are now using these to learn how to use Outlook calendar more effectively, for example, and to cascade to others – even their Heads of Department.

Quotes from participants during their course presentations:

'This was the first assessed course I've taken part in for 30 years. It was nerve-racking to start. I've always called myself "just an administrator" if anyone asked but now I feel I have so much more to offer and have the confidence and support to succeed.'

'I've enjoyed learning together; it's not so frightening after all. I've

taken this back to my day to day work by continuing to coax and support my colleagues along the journey.'

'The course has altered my way of thinking – it has opened new avenues and thought processes and I feel I now have the confidence to step out of my comfort zone. I know I will get support to achieve new things and challenge the status quo.'

'I have been able to reflect on work practices. I've been thinking about the move to open-plan offices. Although we didn't like it to start, I can now see we learn and work together. We all use similar language and ways to phrase things on the phone. This course has given me the space to realise this and the benefits of it.'

'The Moodle site clarifies and supports my learning and builds a real sense of community. It's like our virtual staff room.'

'The course has allowed me to step back from the day to day, and I have been able to reflect on why we do things, how we can work smarter. My New Academic Year resolution is to build time to reflect and review my practice and [the course] has given me confidence to suggest new ways of working.'

Impact of the programme and future work

The programme has proven to be an important mechanism to engage with staff from previously disparate teams and to support them during a period of significant change. It is also a good opportunity for new staff to participate in the course during their first year, so that they can build a support network of colleagues from across the departments and also give an opportunity to share their experiences of working elsewhere. We are able to build on networks of learning that began during the course to ensure implementation of new policies and procedures at the University. This will be an important demonstration of quality

improvement and enhancement when the institution is next audited by the QAA.

Feedback is positive from staff who participated in the programme during academic year 2010-11. The programme will be repeated in 2011-12 with a waiting list in operation for the first course. We are also getting enquiries from staff from outside the academic support team and will be opening this up more widely to staff from other central support teams in due course.

Participants are asking 'what next?' We decided not to map the SEDA programme onto undergraduate or masters level credits, but some staff are asking for a PG certificate in HE administration, for example, or in leadership and this will be explored. SEDA PDF programmes running at other institutions have mapped the programme outcomes to PG certificates. SEDA are exploring the idea that this course could become a feeder course for the AUA PG Cert in Professional Practice (Higher Education Administration and Management). The SEDA PDF committee are also investigating a national workshop for SEDA PDF course leaders to share experiences and lessons learned.

One participant described her journey:

Come and walk with me?

The participant felt unsure at the beginning of her journey. There was a lot of change and – what's in it for me? Do I want to do this? What will I get out of it?

I will take you by the hand.

The staff member described how she felt valued by the institution and that she was not alone – she felt more confident in approaching her line manager but also her network of colleagues and contacts around the University.

I see you dancing!

She described the course as a re-birth, giving her confidence in herself and her previous experience and that she had a lot to offer the University.

Bibliography

Barnett, R. (2005) 'Re-opening research: new amateurs or new professionals?', in R. Finnegan (ed.) *Participating in the Knowledge Society*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 263-278.

Barnett, R. and di Napoli, R. (2008) *Changing Identities in Higher Education: voicing perspectives*, Abingdon: Routledge.

Bauman, Z. (2005) 'The liquid-modern challenges to education', in *Values in Higher Education*, S. Robinson and C. Katulushi

(eds.), Vale of Glamorgan: Aureus Publishing, pp. 36-50.

Becher, T. and Trowler, P. (2001) *Academic Tribes and Territories: intellectual enquiry and the culture of disciplines*, Buckingham: SRHE/Open University Press.

Bennett, H., Hogarth, A., Kynaston, R. and Maynard, C. (2008) "'I fully understand how we all fit together...'" Introducing SEDA's Developing Professional Practice Award at LJMU', *Educational Developments*, Issue 9.1, Feb. 2008, pp. 1-4.

Henkel, M. (2000) *Academic Identities. Policy change in higher education*, London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Whitchurch, C. (2008) 'Professional managers in UK higher education: preparing for complex futures – final report', London: Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (tinyurl.com/3ke3c6v).

Whitchurch, C. (2006) 'Who do they think they are? The changing identities of professional administrators and managers in UK higher education', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, Volume 28, Number 2, July 2006, pp. 159-171(13).

For more information on JISC Work-with-IT, see: www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/staffroles/workit.aspx

For more information on SEDA PDF, see: www.seda.ac.uk/professional-development.html?p=3_1

Julie Hall is the Head of the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit (Julie.Hall@roehampton.ac.uk) and **Sarah Hall** is the Assistant Registrar (Sarah.Hall@roehampton.ac.uk), both at Roehampton University.

The personal tutor system: any questions?

Debbie McVitty, National Union of Students

NUS has recently launched a new Charter on Personal Tutors. Working with student representatives, we have pulled together ten key principles and practices that we think should be included in any institutional personal tutoring system. Students' unions are encouraged to use the Charter to examine where their institutional system falls short of ideal, and lobby to make the necessary changes and enhancements.

Personal tutoring systems have traditionally offered a first point of contact for students in distress. Students who are comfortable with their progress, or who have not had to contend with a family emergency may not have felt the need to make use of their personal tutor. Likewise, academics may see the system as offering a 'go-to' person whom students are free to make use of, or not, as they prefer.

Increasingly, however, personal tutoring systems are expected to deliver much more than a friendly face and a shoulder to cry on. The pastoral function is downplayed as institutions offer expert advice and guidance to students on specific issues. Institutional systems now position the personal tutor as an academic guide and mentor, or an academic developer with oversight of the personal development planning (PDP) process.

In an increasingly massified system of higher education, the role of the personal tutor becomes ever more crucial to students learning effectively. Students need to feel that they are an individual embarking on their own learning journey, not a nameless face at the back of a classroom. Personal tutors have the potential to enable the student to negotiate their own learning pathways, develop their mastery

of academic modes of thinking and producing, and relate these to their future aspirations. For some students, especially those with limited prior experience of higher education, the personal tutor system can mean the difference between staying on a course, and leaving early.

If the system works.

But the very idea of a personal tutoring 'system' is arguably impossible. A system that can meet the diverse needs of students and academics, and apply in every subject, is a huge undertaking for any institution – and more especially when resources are tight. That is why a set of principles can only ever be a starting point for working towards a shared understanding between students and staff as to what the personal tutor system can reasonably be expected to deliver, based on local concerns and priorities.

How can students have shared ownership of personal tutor systems?

Students and staff need to reflect on what the fundamental purpose of the system is and how it can meet the needs of both students and academics. Personal tutor systems can have multiple functions, from personal development planning, to monitoring of progress and flagging up causes for concern, to pastoral care or signposting of information, to fundamentally being about boosting student retention. The purpose needs to be agreed and clear, and may vary by department or level or mode of study.

Academics need to consider what they get out of the system as well – if it is merely thought of as a service that is provided to students, then academics will see it as yet another task on a very long and bureaucratic list! For academics, the personal tutor system can be an opportunity to seek informal feedback on the student learning experience, teaching methods, or student views about a particular policy or practice in their department, for example. If students are involved in delivering academic staff development on the personal tutoring system, it can be a really valuable way of developing shared understandings of how the system can meet different needs and ensuring that the system is able to develop and change over time.

The details of the organisation of the system also need to be worked out as a negotiation between staff and students. How often meetings happen, and whether these take place face-to-face or remotely, or one-to-one or in small groups, will depend entirely on the preferences of students and academics and, more likely, what resource is available.

Perhaps most importantly, students and academics can share ownership of how the system is monitored, and how the value of the system is communicated and good practice shared. Some students' unions have built personal tutoring into their teaching awards, allowing students to nominate their personal tutor for recognition. If the purpose of the system is to increase retention, it becomes even more important to capture students' and academics' experience of the system, and where it has made a difference to a student's

life. In some cases, some students will need more support than others, and it will be appropriate to target scarce resources. That is a conversation that will need to be had more and more in the coming months and years.

The NUS Charter on Personal Tutors can be accessed at tinyurl.com/3q9rq7 or by emailing student.engagement@nus.org.uk.

Dr Debbie McVitty is the Research and Policy Officer (Higher Education) at the National Union of Students.

Personal Tutoring in Higher Education – Where Now and Where Next?

by **Mike Laycock**

Seda Special 25

British higher education has always had a reputation for good personal tutoring but, as Mike Laycock writes '... the personal tutor system has been under strain for some time'. In this extensive literature survey he extracts the core issues, such as which model a university might be using, who is doing the tutoring, what sort of tutorial relationships are they forming, what might be the benefits and the costs, and how any system might be supported.

He analyses the various models which are being deployed and offers many case studies which show recent and interesting developments. In particular, he explores the relationship between personal tutoring and widening participation, retention, the first year experience, online and distance learning and Personal Development Planning. He also explores the business case for investment in this area, and the staff development implications of the models in use.

The special is also intensely practical, as Mike Laycock summarises his survey with a full set of recommendations for future action. The bibliography comprises nearly 200 items, giving the full background to this vitally important subject.

Price: **£12.00**

SEDA Specials web-page: tinyurl.com/3vloy9w

The Future of CPD for Professional Staff – the Association of University Administrators' CPD Framework

Jan Shine and Alison Robinson Canham, AUA

Introduction

The AUA exists to advance and promote the professional recognition and development of all who work in professional services roles in higher education. Members are committed to a set of professional values, including a commitment to 'the continuous development of their own and others' professional knowledge, skills and practices'. The Association celebrates its Golden Jubilee in 2011 and has a long tradition of supporting innovative professional development. In 2007 the AUA secured HEFCE Leadership, Governance and Management project funds to develop a CPD Framework for 'university administrators'. The resultant AUA CPD Framework for Professional Services Staff was launched in 2009. In 2010 the Association secured further funding to support a range of implementation projects. At the time of writing, more than 20 institutions are being supported in the bespoke adoption and adaptation of the AUA CPD Framework, with expressions of interest now invited for a second cohort of projects.

The aims of the two-year project were to develop and implement a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) framework supporting HE professional services staff across the UK in their career development in order to:

- enhance institutional performance through high quality staff
- develop management and leadership capability
- enable succession planning
- provide a framework for sustainable practice in career planning
- foster equality and diversity of development opportunities across the sector.

Process and methodology

Extensive desk research provided examples of CPD frameworks

developed within the sector, and we gathered a sample of frameworks from non-HE public and private sector organisations and professional bodies, together with various publications, systems and processes relevant to CPD. Links were also made with other relevant projects and research, for example the HEaTED project, the research into academic and administrative functions in HE (Whitchurch, 2008), and the LFHE/AHUA Working Group on Professional Careers in HE, and most notably the Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education. Two sets of National Occupational Standards (NOS) – the Council for Administration NOS for Business and Administration and the Chartered Management Institute NOS for Management and Leadership – informed the professional behaviours framework.

One of the project's key objectives was to build on existing good practice in the sector, and an initial survey of all UK HEIs and relevant HE professional bodies was conducted in December 2007. The survey benefited from a high (42% of HEIs and 50% of professional bodies) response rate and overwhelmingly positive feedback. The project's objective of providing equality of CPD opportunities was particularly welcomed, and there was enthusiasm for developing a common CPD approach across HEIs, most notably strong support for the opportunity to recognise HE managers and administrators as a professional group in their own right. The survey raised two areas of concern. Many respondents highlighted the fact that pre-existing CPD requirements were linked to the professional identity of many specialist staff and were doubtful about how the AUA framework would fit. There was also some scepticism about whether it was possible to develop a meaningful generic framework to cover the wide range of roles and levels proposed. The

decision early on that the framework should apply to all professional services staff in HE, in other words everyone employed in HE other than those on academic terms and conditions of service, felt like a significant milestone in terms of breaking down barriers between traditional 'support' or 'secretarial/clerical' roles and 'management' or 'academic-related' roles.

The survey had given us insight into the institutional view, and to create a richer picture we held a series of focus groups in Spring 2008 to seek the views of professional services staff, whose outputs provided the basis for the first draft of the framework. We decided that a framework which articulated behavioural patterns that exemplify the AUA's professional standards and values would be of most value to the sector (*i.e.* how professional services roles need to be performed).

During the refinement of the professional behaviours framework it became clear that any attempt to split the professional behaviours into those relevant at different role levels would prove meaningless, due to the diversity and complexity of the sector and the institutions within it. Instead, we chose the three 'aspects' of performance approach (self, others, organisation). We were determined to discard the outdated 'non-academic' nomenclature once and for all, but finding a suitable alternative collective descriptor for the target audience that would be sufficiently generic and that everyone agreed upon proved challenging. We asked the focus group participants to help, and finally chose 'professional services' which we tested out in the second round of consultation (autumn 2008), circulating the first draft of the professional behaviours framework to HEIs and through further focus groups. Although the response rate was lower, the quality of the feedback was exceptional. Overall, the framework was positively received,

and the professional behaviours in particular were warmly welcomed by respondents, some of whom felt that they could now cease work on developing their own framework as the AUA framework would more than meet their needs. It was launched at the AUA Conference in Exeter in April 2009.

The CPD framework

The CPD framework provides, for the first time, a basis for a common national approach to CPD for professional services staff in UK higher education. It offers a model of professional behaviours together with a range of documentation to aid interpretation and implementation, for example, CPD document templates, guidance notes for HEIs and for professional services staff and exemplar career pathways. These resources will be further developed in light of feedback from pilot institutions.

The framework's key strength is its inherent flexibility, working equally well at individual, team, departmental and institutional levels. The beauty of this is that members of professional services staff, managers and leaders can still benefit from the framework even if their institution is not adopting the CPD framework more widely. Other examples of the flexibility afforded by the framework include:

- it is applicable to staff at all levels
- it complements existing CPD requirements associated with some specialist roles
- HEIs may tailor the framework and supporting documentation to meet their own specific needs.

Using the CPD framework

Many teams and departments have been using the framework. Feedback from users is extremely positive and indicates that the

model of professional behaviours is a valuable tool across many staffing and organisational issues.

Table 1 summarises just some of the ways that HEIs are using the professional behaviours.

Taking the work forward

Nevertheless, research suggested the provision of development opportunities for professional services staff can be unsystematic and does not align to an overarching national agenda of workforce development, and discussion during workshops suggested a perceived disparity between institutional staff development policy and the availability of relevant, affordable development opportunities for functional teams or individual practitioners. Simply launching a CPD Framework would not be sufficient to effect a lasting shift towards professionalisation, as at a time of unprecedented change and challenge in our sector there is a major risk that 'nice to have' initiatives fall by the wayside.

The motivation to bid for a second tranche of HEFCE LGM funds came from a desire to ensure the AUA's CPD Framework didn't just collect dust on a shelf, and more importantly presented opportunities for institutions to adopt and adapt the Framework in a cost-effective way. Furthermore, the AUA was committed to using the work as the basis for creating a community of practice which would share the experiences of implementation projects and make project resources available to colleagues embarking on their own organisational development initiatives. Thus the bid explicitly referenced an agenda of workforce development in the wake of the HEFCE Workforce Development Framework published in February 2010, and proposed to:

- provide intensive consultancy

style support for a cohort of early adopters using the AUA CPD Framework to address specific change management, organisational development or strategic objectives

- create a self-sustaining pool of expert champions to provide peer-support to subsequent adopters seeking to customise the Framework to local needs
- capture rich intelligence about the pre-existing development climate, specifically opportunities for development and progression available to professional services colleagues, and disseminate the learning from the implementation experience
- establish and maintain an accessible archive of case studies, CPD tools and implementation strategies to support the sector in adopting and adapting the Framework. (We expect to derive these resources from supported pilot adopters, and from a portfolio of mini-projects designed to disseminate the experience and learning of those adopting the Framework without the intensive support provided to the pilot cohorts)
- contribute to the development of professional services staff as self-motivated agents of change operating within an increasingly constrained funding context where the imperative will be on working across boundaries and doing more with less.

The proposal was also predicated on a total commitment to creating a self-sustaining model which could continue beyond the lifetime of the funding, independent of any single institution or mission group, but nonetheless highly accountable as a charity and visible as a sector body. The proposal was widely supported.

Individuals	Team/unit level	Organisational level
Self assessment Identify personal CPD needs Career planning Applying for roles Giving and receiving informal feedback 360° feedback	Identifying team strengths and CPD needs Recruitment and selection Induction Formal appraisal	Mapping/designing learning and development activities Organisational development Succession planning

Table 1 Uses of professional behaviours by HEIs

Implementing the Framework

The bid was successful. We then received over 20 proposals from HEIs and sector bodies covering a wide range of creative ideas for implementing the framework. The projects range from small-team implementation through to institution-wide adoption and adaptation of the framework. The challenging economic climate within which the pilots are taking place provides an excellent opportunity to test the robustness of the framework not only to deliver its stated objectives, but also to support and deliver timely and relevant organisational development. The evaluation data from the first cohort will enable us to continue to refine the framework and its supporting documentation. A principal objective of the AUA CPD initiative is to capture the learning and real experience of developing and delivering projects of this type, including evidence of barriers and inhibitors to success and strategies for overcoming these. A first collection of case studies and stories-so-far is anticipated in late autumn 2011, but we present some early headlines here.

Curriculum development projects

The CPD Framework has provided the structure and impetus for curriculum development initiatives, including a potential BA in HE Management and Administration, and a sub-degree Portfolio Award.

- In the BA, pre-existing Business School and Education modules are being complemented by some HE-specific modules incorporating sector knowledge and closely aligned with the elements of the CPD Framework. The project arose from a curriculum innovation competition within the institution and so has attracted high-level strategic support. The early indication is that this has mitigated issues of departmental 'ownership', but has not entirely insulated the initiative from the impact of staff turnover and the loss of key champions within the institution.
- The sub-degree Portfolio Award has provided an interesting

opportunity for the pilot institution to complement existing development provision for senior leaders and middle managers across Registry and Faculty Administration with a scheme aimed at the professionalisation of more junior colleagues. In this instance the AUA CPD Framework is being adopted to align with a multiplicity of pre-existing institutional 'core attributes'. Furthermore, colleagues from Academic Development have proactively sought involvement with the project steering group with the explicit objective of mapping against both SEDA Values and HEA Professional Standards.

Restructuring and culture change projects

A significant number of the project proposals anticipated forthcoming restructuring or sought to achieve cultural coherence following restructure.

- A large multi-discipline central service adopted the AUA CPD Framework to provide a common reference point for department-wide development activity. The particular challenge in this context was the diversity of professional specialisms within the department, each with its own established custom and practice. A bespoke mentoring scheme has been introduced to facilitate leadership development and support the evolution of a coherent staff development and people management culture across and between the different constituent teams. The adoption of the AUA CPD Framework has provided a language which has sector-wide currency but also transcends the diversity of specialist discourses.

Quality enhancement projects

The Framework has already proved to be a valuable vehicle to facilitate challenging conversations and promote quality enhancement.

- In a situation where a merged institution is seeking to consolidate three Registry legacies across multiple campuses, the project team has used the CPD Framework to facilitate candid, de-politicised conversations. As a result those most closely responsible for Registry practice have articulated issues for further consideration by more senior colleagues and developed a shared collegiate approach to proactive and positive contribution to institutional policy development. The impetus and energy for the initiative has come from relatively junior colleagues, who might not ordinarily have had the confidence to contribute to strategy, using the CPD Framework to open channels of communication with policy-makers.

Collaborative inter-professional projects

In addition to institutionally-based projects the initiative has embraced opportunities to map other emergent or extant frameworks with the AUA Framework and Professional Behaviours.

- A dedicated project proposed by the Association of Research Administrators and Managers (ARMA) has led to detailed mapping work to cross-reference and align the two professional frameworks. In other instances the institutional projects have presented opportunities for articulating Frameworks associated with different professional communities within the sector. In particular, reference has been made to SEDA Values, HEA Professional Standards Framework and CIPD. Over the course of the funded initiative we will collate evidence of these inter-professional alignments and seek to facilitate a sector-wide mapping of HE professional frameworks.

Early findings

Feedback so far suggests that some of the challenges in implementing the framework include convincing overloaded line managers of the benefits of investing their time in applying the framework, implementing the framework with colleagues who are not engaged and who express disinterest in development opportunities, and up-skilling line managers in their role as developers of others. The positive messages from the pilot groups include the relevance of the framework not just to their professional services staff but across all staff categories including academic staff. Clarifying how the framework fits with existing information about a role (job descriptions and person specifications), to complete a comprehensive picture of the requirements of professional services roles, is key in promoting the benefits of the framework.

Of the first cohort of 20 projects about 80% are progressing broadly in line with initial or revised expectations. The case studies will aim to articulate what inhibits or blocks progress as well as celebrating the successes. Many of the expressions of interest were based on an enthusiasm to experiment with the Framework to address a set of circumstances without necessarily having clear outcomes from the start. This has offered the flexibility to challenge assumptions and be creative in the modes of application. The AUA was committed to ensuring flexibility in the projects so that institutions were not constrained by limiting assumptions about the potential utility of the Framework, and to ensure the Framework was robustly scrutinised.

We can now identify a number of key challenges and inhibitors to success with projects, including: staff changes and instability during restructuring; longer than anticipated restructure processes; loss of key staff and champions for projects; and, in the current climate, change fatigue. That said, feedback to date suggests that the AUA CPD Framework has provided a flexible and attractive mechanism for mitigating some of these factors and that its occupational relevance to HE staff has answered some cynicism about institutions' genuine

commitment to professionalisation. Above all, we have observed that enthusiastic champions at all levels of responsibility are key to making progress, and indeed that in some instances more junior involvement and leadership create a safe environment for constructive and purposeful challenge to institutional assumptions.

A small team of consultants recruited from the HE and commercial sectors has been providing support to the first cohort of projects. Considerable effort will be directed at developing project leaders from the early cohorts to act as peer mentors and implementation buddies to subsequent cohorts of projects. Although the original intention was for the peer mentors to be exclusively recruited from the supported projects, we now anticipate recruiting additional volunteer mentors from the wider community of developers and sector professionals, as well as continuing to deploy some consultancy support. This approach remains consistent with the intention of supporting the development of a community of practice, skilled and confident in the support of implementation projects focused on the creative use of the AUA Framework.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the development and launch of the AUA CPD Framework for Professional Services Staff was a major landmark in the professionalisation of UK Higher Education management and administration. We could not have achieved such a positive outcome without an active and committed Steering Group, or without the 96 members of professional services staff, the 78 HEIs and the seven professional bodies who made a significant contribution throughout the consultation phases of the project. This high level of engagement within the sector was one of the key factors that contributed to the success of the project.

The current challenging economic climate means that effective mechanisms for the recruitment, motivation, development and succession planning of professional services staff at all levels are essential if institutions and the professional services staff within them are to

respond to the changing needs of the HE sector. The framework will enable institutions to put those mechanisms in place to support the needs of individuals as well as the longer-term strategic objectives of institutions and the sector as a whole.

References

HEaTED – Higher Education and Technicians Educational Development. A HEFCE-funded project aiming to consolidate, promote and expand participation in professional development activities for HE technical staff (http://www.heated.ac.uk/about_us.php).

Whitchurch, C. (2008). *Professional Managers in UK Higher Education: preparing for complex futures*. Final report, Research and Development Series, London: Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.

Notes

The CPD Framework and supporting documentation can be found at the professional development section of the AUA website (www.aua.ac.uk).

To find out more about being an implementation mentor for the next cohort of projects during 2011-12, contact Brenda.dakers@aua.ac.uk.

Jan Shine is a freelance consultant who worked on the development of the AUA CPD Framework and is Lead Consultant on the HEFCE-funded implementation initiative.

Alison Robinson Canham is Executive Director of AUA and the Project Lead for the implementation initiative.

Notice to Publishers

Books for review should be sent to:

SEDA

Woburn House,
20 - 24 Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9HF
E-mail office@seda.ac.uk

The SEDA May Conference in Edinburgh

Celia Popovic, Independent Consultant, and **Fiona Campbell**, Napier University

The two-day SEDA conference in Edinburgh has been deemed a success – despite clashing with the Scottish parliamentary election, the failure of the conference materials to arrive on time and the onset of rain shortly before the planned Walk and Talk – the consensus is that this was an example of SEDA at its best.

Ray Land delivered the opening keynote to over a hundred delegates who had met at the Holyrood Hotel next to the Scottish Parliament Building. In a lively and entertaining delivery he compared the current state of HE with that of the late eighteenth-century enlightenment, which was also a time of change and transition. He told us that academics will need to respond to a future which is likely to be determined by students and what they need, rather than by the institution or strict discipline-based academics. Learning in the future is likely to be characterised by uncertainty, speed, complexity and risk. Our understanding of knowledge itself is undergoing change, as what we know expands in all directions. In the future we are going to see far more interdisciplinary work, characterised by super-complexity, which will provoke anxiety, will be risky and challenging, but which will ultimately be exciting and absorbing. Land presented some novel approaches to learning that seek to engage with this changing world, and which use experiential and problem-based learning models, rather than traditional teacher-led approaches. He used these examples as ways in which academics can get excited about their discipline and about learning while engaging students in authentic work-related activities.

Each delegate's experience will be different as we made our choices for the three parallel sessions on day one, but for many of us the high point was the Walk and Talk in Holyrood Park. In an activity organised and hosted by Edinburgh Napier University, we escaped outside to savour the wonderful environment and views and engage with colleagues in our shared visions and values.

A very pleasant and convivial drinks reception and dinner gave us the chance to network with colleagues new and old and to reflect on our impressions of day one.

Day two got off to an equally inspiring start as we welcomed the NUS President, Aaron Porter, back to SEDA to give us the first day two keynote address. As Aaron's term of office comes to a close in what has been a remarkably turbulent year for student politics he urged us to talk up the achievements of HE, reminding us that we have much to be proud of and to defend. Like Ray the previous day, Aaron commented on the changing expectations of students who face increasing debt to gain a university degree, telling us they will expect increasing real-world experience, employer engagement and obvious links to work-based skills. He stressed the need to manage students' induction even more than we have in the past and to resist the temptations of grade inflation as universities compete to show the 'value for money' of their degrees. He shared many delegates' concerns about the increase in

student fees and the emphasis on reducing costs while paying little attention to quality. He mused on the possibility of some students having different experiences on the same course because some had paid more than others.

As with day one the three parallel sessions ensured a breadth of topics for participants to engage with. Around 40 delegates were able to tour the Scottish Parliament while others explored Edinburgh or attended the reading group. Lorraine Stefani's closing plenary ended the conference on a significant high. We were treated to a fascinating and compelling performance from Lorraine during which she encouraged us to link with colleagues across our institutions, to see the bigger picture, and to take every opportunity to articulate our impact on practice and to emphasise the value of educational development. Her rousing message and engaging delivery was a perfect finale to the conference, and left her audience uplifted, enthused and energised to face the challenges of a changing HE sector.

Here are a few comments from participants asked about the best aspects of the conference:

'Learning about the state of play for academic development across the country! Going to some very good sessions. The stoicism of SEDA in general.'

'Opportunity to find out what's going on in other institutions; to experience different approaches to workshop design and facilitation, to meet acquaintances and new faces.'

'It provided a great overview of the passion of educational/academic developers.'

'SEDA is a great community and conferences are always stimulating with supportive colleagues.'

'Excellent keynotes and workshops which all provided ideas and insight into issues and problems I'm facing in my role.'

'Chatting (professionally and personally!) with so many people – very useful and friendly; and this includes the walk, absolutely brilliant idea!'

'Meeting engaging people – who were well versed in their areas, provocative conversations made me think differently.'

'I just felt like I fitted in.'

If you missed the May conference and now regret it, or you attended and would like to repeat the experience, bookings are being taken for the next one to be held in Birmingham on 17-18 November. Booking details are available at www.seda.ac.uk/events.html.

Celia Popovic is an Independent Consultant (celia.popovic@gmail.com) and **Fiona Campbell** is Head of Professional Development at Edinburgh Napier University (f.campbell@napier.ac.uk).

Please do not defer.... A personal reflection of participation on the PGCLT (HE)

Paula Stone, Canterbury Christ Church University

The article 'To defer or not to defer... that is the (perennial) question' (by Jo Peat published in *Educational Developments* 11.3, September 2010), and the subsequent article by Helen Gale (*Educational Developments* 12.1, March 2011), inspired me to reflect on my own experience of the Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching (HE) (PgCert) which was very close to completion at that time. In particular, it made me think about the value of the programme in terms of enabling new academic staff to meet the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education (HE) (tinyurl.com/3zfabls).

At a time when the current standards are under review, is it time to consider the value of the PgCert as a means of ensuring all new members of staff are able to 'Demonstrate an understanding of the student learning experience through engagement with all areas of activity' (Standard Descriptor 2)? Or is it still possible to say that these programmes are merely a reflection of the increased and unwarranted interference by the previous Labour Government as set out in the White Paper 'The Future of Higher Education' (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2003, chapter 4).

Presented here is my personal perspective. At the time of my enrolment, I was in my first year of a permanent contract having been employed by my institution on a sessional basis for one year already. I was experiencing all the tensions of being a new academic, most notably the transition from expert to novice in terms of pedagogy, but novice assumed to be expert in terms of research activity (Murray and Male, 2005).

At my institution it is a condition of appointment for all academic staff new to teaching in Higher Education (HE) to

complete the Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching (HE), if they have less than one year's UK higher education teaching experience. Exceptions do apply, however, and the discretion of the Head of Department is an important consideration. In my case, because of my previous experience and qualifications, this discretion applied.

Gosling (2010) claims that there is still an element of resistance to the growing regulatory environment of learning and teaching in Higher Education. Indeed, this was the response from some of my faculty colleagues, largely those who had not participated in the programme, when I stated that I was going to participate in the PgCert. Those who had participated were generally more positive about the experience overall, and were keen to acknowledge the impact on their practice.

I attended the Introduction to the PGCLT (HE) session as part of my induction programme. I found the content of the session and the overview of the course both stimulating and challenging. So, undeterred, I registered for the programme. There were a number of reasons for my decision to engage despite there being no requirement of my contract as I held a PGCE (Primary) and a Masters in Education: I was looking for a stimulus for my own research activity; I wanted to develop my skills knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning in HE so that my teaching would be less stressful and more rewarding; and I wanted to find a community of practitioners with whom I felt able to share my 'novice' opinions.

The Programme

The PGCLT (HE) at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) is a programme of learning to help new staff identify and meet their immediate

personal and professional development needs set in a broader context of induction and staff development activities.

'The aim of the programme is to encourage participants to become knowledgeable, and critical reflective professionals, able to work as effective educators in an increasingly diverse HE sector.' (Programme Handbook, p. 7)

The PgCert is structured to be tutor-led but is centred around discussion and collaboration; the handbook states:

'that the fundamental feature of the programme is the desire to create a "safe environment" in which colleagues can engage in free and frank exchange of ideas...In this light the programme is not designed to engender a "culture of compliance" amongst academic workers, but contribute to the maintenance of a lively and supportive "academic learning community".' (p. 6)

The structure of the programme

There were five taught modules and a pedagogic study through which participants are encouraged to investigate an issue that is of direct importance to their teaching or support of students. The programme has recently been revalidated with a slightly different structure, but the content is largely still the same. There is an option to use the Accreditation of Prior Learning procedures to replace the Introduction to Teaching and Learning for those who already have substantial experience or a recognised teaching qualification (outside of HE). There are four other taught courses: Teaching for Learning in HE; Supporting Students as Learners; Curriculum, Assessment and Quality Assurance; and Understanding HE.

The programme can be taken over one or two years. I attended all the taught sessions in one year but decided not to submit the pedagogic study until year 2. This gave me time to adapt to the pressures of teaching combined with scholarly activity, but enabled me to continue to reflect and develop my practice for an extended period. I did not consider this opportunity as a 'lesser priority to my other academic activities' (Peat, 2010).

Did it have an impact on my practice?

The programme has definitely had a significant impact on my professional identity as a tutor in initial teacher education (ITE). I no longer see myself just as a teacher: I am now beginning to develop professional identity as a researcher too. And indeed the Programme enabled me to integrate my own research activity with my teaching.

There has been much research about the transition from practitioner to researcher in initial teacher education (Murray, 1998; Harrison and McKeon, 2010; Griffiths *et al.*, 2010). When I joined the institution, although there was a clear expectation to engage in both teaching, research and scholarly activity, like many new primary initial teacher educators I saw my primary role as teaching and supporting students (Murray, 1998, p. 143). The PgCert not only encouraged me to consider the value of research-informed teaching, but it also helped me to understand my role as a researcher. It enabled me to talk with other new colleagues in the university at an academic level – something that can be intimidating for those new to academia. The assignments made it possible for me to engage in small pieces of academic writing, upon which I received feedback, that helped me reflect and improve my practice and ability to conduct research.

I do not intend to describe the merits of each course but would like to draw attention to a few of the activities that enabled me to reflect on my role as a new ITE tutor and develop and enhance my practice.

The ongoing learning log encouraged me to reflect on the sessions directly after, thinking about the issues and how I could use the ideas to develop my practice. This also served to increase my confidence in making contributions at meetings, particularly about the development of programmes, widening participation, personal tutoring and assessment. I have since been involved in working groups in all of these areas.

In the Curriculum Design, Assessment and Quality Assurance course, with the support of visiting tutors from the QA department, something that Helen Gale advocates in her article, we considered the various influences on how the curriculum is designed and assessed in HE. As a consequence of these sessions, I now have a deeper understanding of the purpose of assessment for learning in HE and have used this to contribute to discussion about assessment tasks on some of the programmes on which I work. I used the pedagogic study to examine ITE students' attitudes to the feedback they had received on an assignment. Based on the results of the data collected, I now write fewer, but more constructive, comments that enable students to understand not only where they have gone wrong but also what they need to do to improve.

The Teaching for Learning in HE course enabled me to reflect on the content and delivery of sessions on the ITE mathematics course. My critical narrative for this course compared a traditional teacher-led teaching strategy with a more problem-based learning approach. Through engagement with the reading, I developed my taught sessions by introducing more activities based on an enquiry-based learning (EBL) and peer-supported approach that encourages students to learn in a more independent way.

The Understanding Higher Education course probably had the most enduring impact on my practice and professional identity. Initially, it was just interesting to chart the development of Higher Education since 1335 and how the position of the university has shifted from a place

whereby education was available to the intellectual elite to the much more instrumental model, with increased participation, promoted by the previous Labour Government. Although I found it difficult to come to terms with the arguments which created internal dilemmas, it enabled me to begin to reflect on my own ideology – should the University focus on traditional academia where learning takes place for learning's sake or should it focus on serving the public good? If that is the case, in my position as a tutor in initial teacher education am I merely an agent working for the benefit of society? Was I an agent of academic competency at all? Subsequent sessions raised many questions in my mind about my professional identity as a teacher in ITE, for example, what is my role as an academic – is it a teacher or a researcher? Which is most important? Which does the University value? These questions have stimulated many a lengthy discussion in the Senior Common Room!

The recommendations of The Browne Report (2010) are also extremely pertinent – they appear to indicate an even greater regulation of quality of provision in HE, as students make even greater contributions to their education.

'It will be a condition of receipt of income from the Student Finance Plan for the costs of learning that institutions require all new academics with teaching responsibilities to undertake a teaching training qualification accredited by the HE Academy, and that the option to gain such a qualification is made available to all staff – including researchers and postgraduate students – with teaching responsibilities.'
(Browne, 2010, p. 48)

More specifically:

'Anonymised information about the proportion of teaching-active staff with such a qualification should be made available at subject level by each institution.'
(Browne, 2010, p. 48)

Thus it seems the question will not arise anymore about how mandatory is the PgCert (Gosling, 2010), but more a case of how the programme can be designed so that staff value the qualification and those who teach it. Helen Gale offered some interesting solutions to address some of the excuses that tutors use so as not to participate fully in the PgCert.

Some final comments

With an increasing emphasis on the value of high quality teaching, the Higher Education Academy has recently launched a review of the UKPSF. The UKPSF review identifies ten areas for future development: academic practice focus, external examiner training and development, disciplinary expertise, new and emerging technologies, sustainability, qualified to teach, public information, alignment of professional standards, progression and career enhancement, and recognition, reward and promotion – all issues that were encompassed in the PgCert Programme.

Whether mandatory or not, I strongly assert that the PgCert did enable me to demonstrate all aspects of my role as a tutor in Higher Education in line with the UKPSF (Higher Education Academy, 2006) and the values of my own institution. I felt my pedagogy became more effective and appropriate for adult learners as a direct result of engaging with the course content, well-informed and inspiring tutors, and my peers. I improved my ability to provide effective feedback and was able to express my philosophy about learning and teaching with growing confidence and conviction. Most importantly, it made me reflect on the issues that I would not have found time to do otherwise. And as anticipated, the PgCert did indeed act as a springboard for my own doctorate about educators' motivation to engage in research degrees and the impact this has on professional identity. One final benefit of participating in the programme is that I have received continued support from my tutor who has supported me as I develop as a practitioner, researcher and indeed as a writer.

Of course, I did not agree with everything that was presented on the PgCert, and I would hope that people

would not be expected to, but it was by being presented with perspectives and issues that it provoked deeper critical engagement. For example, one of our guest tutors felt very strongly that e-assessment in HE will have a significant impact on the way we assess students. I feel very strongly that this may not be the case so I presented a critical narrative entitled 'Computer Assisted Assessment: Is this the only way forward? A comparison of two innovative assessment strategies in Higher Education', arguing just that.

Was I alone in thinking that the PgCert had enhanced my practice? When I asked my peers, who have attended the programme over recent years, I found mixed reactions. However, most had found that their teaching had become more effective, and more rewarding.

How do I feel about those people who have joined the institution and not taken the PgCert? I would say they have missed out on an opportunity that would enable them to reflect and develop their practice whilst being supported by peers and colleagues. As I am sure many of us would say to our students, 'it is not the arrival at the destination that is important but it is about the journey along the way'. For me the PgCert was more about engaging with the issues through discussion and research than the award itself.

Part of my role now is as a member of the Staff Development Team for the Faculty of Education and I am pleased to say that I can present a very strong case for participation in the PgCert. Would I say that the PgCert should be mandatory? – without a doubt! And to all those cynics who see the PgCert as

a regulatory tool that reflects increased Government intervention, I would argue that it is the right of every student to be taught by knowledgeable and reflective professionals, and the PgCert will support them in doing just that.

References

- Browne, Lord (2010) 'Securing a sustainable future for higher education: an independent review of higher education funding and student finance' (tinyurl.com/27ehsdo).
- Department of Business Innovation and Skills (2003) 'The future of higher education' (tinyurl.com/3g4j9jt).
- Gale, H. (2011) "'To defer or not to defer" ... why it may not be the question', *Educational Developments* Vol. 12.1, SEDA.
- Gosling, D. (2010) 'Professional development for new staff – how mandatory is your postgraduate certificate?', *Educational Developments*, June 11.2, London, SEDA.
- Griffiths, V., Thompson, S. and Hryniewicz, L. (2010) 'Developing a research profile: mentoring and support for teacher educators', *Professional Development in Education*, Vol. 36, Nos. 1-2.
- Harrison, J. and McKeon, F. (2010) 'Perceptions of beginning teacher educators and their development in research and scholarship: identifying the "turning point" experiences', *Journal of Education for Teaching*, Vol. 36, No. 1, February.
- Higher Education Academy (2006) 'UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education' (tinyurl.com/32fabls).
- Murray, J. (1998) 'Integration or dichotomy of teaching and research? A case study of primary initial teacher educators', *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, Vol. 4, No. 1.
- Murray, J. and Male, T. (2005) 'Becoming a teacher educator: evidence from the field', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 21, pp. 125-142.
- Peat, J. (2010) 'To defer or not to defer ... that is the (perennial) question' *Educational Developments*, Vol. 11.3, SEDA.

Paula Stone is a Senior Lecturer in Primary Education at Canterbury Christ Church University.

Information for Contributors

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

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

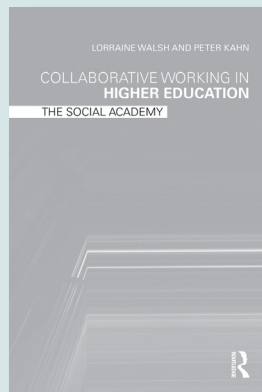
For more information please see: www.seda.ac.uk/publications

Book Review

Collaborative Working in Higher Education: The Social Academy

Lorraine Walsh and Peter Kahn

Routledge, 2010
216 pages



I love this book! I love it because it fills a long-overdue gap in the lexicon of texts that engage with the value of working together. It is a must for educational and academic developers. In its organisation it is almost two books. The text is in three parts. Part 1 has a focus on the social nature of collaboration and introduces a model or framework which the authors use throughout as a means of situating collaborative working in the academy. Part 2 comprises a series of structured case studies examining the different contexts for collaborative working – departmental; discipline and cross-discipline; institutional and international. Part 3 looks to the future but also includes an example of collaboration in action in the form of a transcript of a round-table discussion on collaborative working with Matthew Taylor, CEO of the RSA, Professor Ron Barnett from the Institute of Education, and the authors. The text is also in two sections in so far as there is a theoretical discourse from the authors for each of the sections which also then includes a series of case studies from practitioners to illustrate some of the theoretical points.

The authors argue in Part 1 that collaborative working is now a necessary response to the complexity of contemporary higher education and its attendant uncertainty. It is not a solution, however, and collaborative working is likely as not to increase the complexity and uncertainty – the benefits, however, are likely to be tremendous in terms of building communities of practice and in terms of outcome whether they are enhanced working relationships, enhanced student experiences, or research outcomes. The model that the authors use to describe and articulate collaborative working comprises the interrelated elements (in no particular order) of Context, Professional dialogues, Social vehicles, Engagement and Practice. Social vehicles, for example, are the ‘fundamental social structures’ that underpin collaboration, such as a department or discipline or, as in the case study described by Helen King, a Higher Education Subject Centre. Contexts might be unique to an individual’s circumstances but might also include situations that have been ‘driven’ by external forces – what is an appropriate curriculum to respond to an increase in the number of international students in a particular subject area such as Economics? Put together, all of these elements interact and

become generative, the outcomes are likely to be emergent and unpredictable.

It is clear from the practitioner ‘stories’ – for that is what they are – that some collaborative relationships are sustained and become deeply embedded and others come to an end, they have run their course. The section on ‘brokerage’ is particularly strong, illustrated by Lorraine Stefani’s account of restructuring at the University of Auckland and by Imelda Bates’ and David Baume’s account of collaborative working in medical education between the UK and Ghana. It should also be becoming clear that there is a theme that runs through the text that relates to the values associated with collaborative working – values that are essentially humanistic and predicated on trust.

There are some aspects to the text that might have been developed further and made it even better than it is. Although there is passing reference to appreciative inquiry, there might have been more explicit discussion of structured collaborative techniques such as World Café and Open Space Technology workshops. Similarly, there are sufficient passing references to creativity in the case studies that it might have warranted a separate explicit discussion. Overall, though, for colleagues engaged with promoting collaborative working as a means of generating sustainable enhancement in some way, *Collaborative Working in Higher Education: The Social Academy* provides the conceptual and practice-based evidence for anyone who might wish for it.

Steve Outram is a Senior Adviser at the Higher Education Academy.

Copyright

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

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

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

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

Any opinions expressed are those of the authors.

International community volunteering: Re-visiting Kolb in search of the authentic learning experience

Viv Caruana, Leeds Metropolitan University

Introduction

Volunteering in English higher education has recently gained increasing support among politicians and academics. A consensus is emerging that promoting student volunteering is beneficial in empowering young people, particularly in the context of their future employability and participation in a complex globalised economy and society. Despite such consensus and the ongoing work of organisations like the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, established in 2008 as part of a £9.2 million Beacons for Public Engagement initiative (www.publicengagement.ac.uk/), community volunteering 'remains a minority activity on English higher education campuses...' and evidence of the outcomes of student volunteering is '...piecemeal and fragmented...' (Holdsworth and Quinn, 2010; Jones, 2010). This may in part reflect the nature of such schemes, in that they are generally not related to formal discipline-based curricula or to a particular field of academic or professional study. Instead, they have a dual orientation which suggests benefits for both community (not only in terms of immediate physical benefits, but also for ongoing partnerships between university and community) and for student learning.

International community volunteering at Leeds Metropolitan University

Leeds Metropolitan University's international volunteering programme which began in 2007 has supported the involvement of more than 500 students and staff in '...affordable, safe, meaningful, challenging and rewarding experiences...' whilst sustaining '...beneficial relationships with [the University's] community

partners overseas...' and '... supporting Internationalisation at Leeds Met'. The programme provides a short-term opportunity (usually two to four weeks) for participants to develop global perspectives through community and conservation projects across six continents. Projects have taken volunteers to, for example, Gambia, South Africa, Indonesia, Malaysia, Greece, Sri Lanka, Peru, Brazil and the USA. Projects are developed with existing partners, either universities or charitable foundations, already supported through fund-raising initiatives (Jones, 2010; CPV website).

The university has a clear vision of the importance of community volunteering in both partnership and student learning contexts: 'Our aim is simple: to help more students and staff of Leeds Met to engage in volunteer work both in Leeds and abroad. Why? Because volunteering enhances our personal and professional development and because Leeds Met has a commitment to support its many Community Partners' (CPV website). In terms of student learning, specific outcomes are not prescribed since volunteering initiatives are generally not tied to individual programmes of study. However, the volunteering web pages suggest '...a strong commitment to enhancing the employability skills of all our volunteers', a theme which informs '...the way the programme works: the application and selection process, team sessions on employability and being a reflective practitioner' (Jones, 2010; CPV website, 'About'). The application process requires potential volunteers to consider the skills, knowledge and experience they can bring to the project, their motivations for and expectations of their anticipated volunteering experience and what they

understand by their ambassadorial role in relation to the university and its community partners.

Profiling the student who volunteers

A cursory analysis of applications to the scheme shows that many students have prior volunteering and/or work and/or placement experience, either in the UK or their home country or abroad. Areas of activity commonly include sports, media, conservation and landscape, animal welfare, education, fair trade, community health, law, youth and other welfare programmes and services, charity retail, charitable veterinary care, etc. Applicants tend to have worked with diverse groups in local ethnic minority communities, refugees, migrants, the homeless; with young people in local clubs, schools and societies and on local or international summer schools and camps. A large number of applicants gain their prior volunteering experience through actively engaging with opportunities offered on campus – becoming involved in the students' union, becoming a course representative, peer support leader or student mentor, as an ambassador for the university working with the local community, or stewarding at university-organised events. Some have discharged roles of particular responsibility in voluntary settings and have international experience through study or work.

Prospective volunteers cite extensive capabilities at the point of application and the language they use to articulate them suggests an incisive understanding of the qualities essential for achieving objectives within community volunteering environments. For example, team work is characterised as requiring co-

operation, collaboration, enthusiasm, tenacity, a capacity for give and take, balancing individual and group needs and aspirations, a willingness to exchange views and opinions and to share experience, enabling individuals to become more self-reflective within group settings. The use of humour in developing group dynamic is cited as essential to enabling the team to readily negotiate difficult and testing times. Experience of leaving home to study in an unfamiliar environment and the capacity to juggle the demands of study, part-time work and extra-curricular activities provide evidence of adaptability and flexibility, qualities which in themselves manifest as the ability to change direction, amend plans to adjust to new requirements as they arise, to 'think on your feet', and 'be prepared for anything'.

Responsibility, determination, confidence, planning, organising and prioritising are regarded as essential leadership qualities along with having a happy, positive, optimistic, energetic and ambitious disposition. Being 'proactive' often implies a penchant for risk, exposure to unknown situations, operating outside the 'comfort zone', rising to a challenge, pushing oneself to the limits, whilst being capable of motivating others towards similar dispositions. Particularly in relation to cultural sensitivity, humility, respect for different beliefs, cultures, religions and lifestyles, caring, understanding, patience, openness to 'otherness', sensitivity to difference, honesty, integrity and tolerance, are phrases used to convey applicants' suitability for selection.

Prospective volunteers have a wide range of expectations of the volunteering experience which include building confidence, becoming more independent, learning more about themselves – their own strengths and limitations, how they themselves are 'different', enabling them to understand their place in the world and gaining a sense of purpose from helping others. Whilst future employability and personal development are considerations, contributing to a 'good cause' is high on the list of motivations, and applicants expect – above all – to

have the opportunity to share the skills gained as a result of their 'privileged positions', to create opportunities for others less fortunate than themselves and to improve the quality of life in the communities with which they engage. Jones (2010) similarly suggests that international volunteers tend to have boundary-crossing dispositions, and to enjoy risk and being out of their comfort zone. However, the most significant outcomes of the experience are associated with learning about themselves, about cultural 'others', and about group empathy. Previously held views and stereotypes are effectively challenged through processes like '... putting themselves in other peoples' shoes... being in the minority, sharing humanity, finding connections, considering others' perspectives and reviewing their own cultural assumptions'.

International volunteering as an authentic learning experience – the issues

International volunteering as a foundation for developing graduate capabilities for future employability and citizenship can be problematic. First and foremost, an important issue is the need to balance requirements of the volunteering project – particularly in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that volunteers need to evidence for successful completion of the project – against providing a learning opportunity which enables students not only to develop existing but also to acquire new knowledge, skills and attitudes within unfamiliar cultural settings. Volunteering recruits need to be able to demonstrate the capacity to make a positive contribution at the outset, since the cost of failure to the host weighs particularly heavily in global communities already suffering hardship and often multiple deprivation. Indeed, Jones (2010) acknowledges the possibility that international volunteering programmes might simply provide more opportunities for those '...already engaged...' In a sense it may be necessary to accept that these kinds of schemes attract a particular type of student or indeed that *they need to be able to attract a particular type of student*, in order to deliver

positive outcomes to the communities involved. The key question then becomes, can the experience of these volunteers be harnessed within the curriculum to develop the capabilities of peers who for one reason or another cannot avail themselves of similar opportunities to develop new knowledge, skills and attitudes?

Secondly, the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills and develop new attitudes in the real world no doubt has the potential for significant and valuable learning, but in reality outcomes are often unpredictable. The distinction between reality and discourse is a key consideration and Vanessa Andreotti (2006) refers – with a measure of cynicism – to the new 'civilising mission' which has been thrust upon a generation wholly willing to assume the 'burden' of '...saving, civilising or educating the world...' under the influence of media images and slogans that emphasise the need to be charitable, compassionate and active in recognition of a moral obligation to humanity. It seems that learning from informal community engagement in any part of the world requires some measure of intervention if students are to be able to evidence, articulate, apply and evaluate their learning in the context of future employability and citizenship (Jones and Caruana, 2010; Caruana, 2011). In terms of assessment of learning the concept of empowerment is particularly tricky. Does empowerment emerge simply from abstract feelings of having made a difference, or does it require the unpacking of these affective outcomes within a framework which supports enhanced understanding of the historical, cultural, social and economic roots of the conditions volunteers encounter on project and of the global structures and relationships which perpetuate such conditions?

Re-visiting Kolb in the context of international community volunteering

John Dewey in 1933 alerted us to the fact that whilst all education is experience, experience is not synonymous with learning. Kolb's (1984) four-stage learning cycle,

which comprises two fundamental processes to enable learning from experience – that is, *grasping* the experience and transforming or *acting* on the experience – provides the necessary pedagogical insights to shape curriculum interventions that enable students to demonstrate the achievement of learning in real-world, community-based, cross-cultural encounters like international volunteering.

Kolb argues that experience can be grasped in two different ways. Firstly, concrete experience focuses on tangible elements of the immediate experience – encountering specific events and relating to people. Abstract conceptualisation – the alternative way of grasping the experience – relies on conceptual interpretation and symbolic representation of the experience, logical analysis of ideas and acting on *intellectual understanding* of a situation. Reflective observation and active experimentation are two different ways of acting on the experience. Reflective observation is an internalising mechanism, a process of trying to understand meaning, while active experimentation involves actual manipulation of the external world, in effect influencing people and events through action.

In essence, Kolb's model suggests a process to transform experience into learning, which involves experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting. It assumes that having or grasping an experience without doing anything with it (transforming or acting) is not sufficient for learning. Similarly, transformation cannot occur without an experience to be acted upon. In terms of real-world volunteering experiences, then, the model suggests that tangible episodes or events (apprehending concrete experiences) form the basis for descriptive processing (reflective observations, internalising) which are then distilled into conceptual interpretations (abstract conceptualisation or comprehension of an experience), which then become the basis for action (active experimentation or testing ideas in the real world).

Returning to the unpredictability of learning outcomes from volunteering experiences, it is clear that individual learning styles developed over time, and within particular disciplinary contexts will influence how volunteers engage with their experience. Notwithstanding this, it is likely that in the absence of conscious intervention, the demands of the volunteering environment will tend participants towards the concrete and the immediate, rather than reflective, in grasping the experience. Furthermore, without intervention relatively little will emerge from the experience as a basis for future action (active experimentation).

Reflective journaling with support materials which enable students to identify critical incidents, to consider their existing level of skills and stages of development and how skills development is interconnected with personal qualities, can provide the raw material to enable students to consider how their experience relates to their future employability and citizenship in terms of awareness of self in relation to 'other', communicating effectively across cultural boundaries and gaining multiple perspectives on the world. Sharing reflections with peers can also help to articulate the nature and measure of transformation which has taken place.

In Kolb's terms such processes shift the focus of volunteering from concrete experience to possible future action. A useful spin-off is the broadening of perspectives of home-based students who, for one reason or another, do not avail themselves of these kinds of opportunities. Learning for these students may manifest itself in the development of new curiosities and in the shifting of dispositions and mind-sets.

Of course, for the volunteers themselves, simply sharing reflective observations may not provide the level of abstraction necessary to support future action. Again, in Kolb's terms, international volunteering exposes students to multiple experiences of people and places, but the impact of such exposure

may pale into insignificance over time in the face of popular culture's construction of the world, which tends to over-simplify our understanding of cultural issues. Furthermore, action implies some understanding of how marginalised people have come to experience their world and how the influence of multiple viewpoints can unsettle the dominant ways of reading the world (Subedi, 2010).

Resources which may support processes of empowerment and future action from volunteering experiences

Essentially, empowerment in the context of future employability and citizenship requires engagement with reflective activities that relate private, personal experience to the more formal, public domain. A number of web sites provide resources which may be readily adapted to particular experiences and provide the framework for such activities. For example, the Teaching Citizenship in Higher Education website hosted by the University of Southampton (www.soton.ac.uk/citizened/) offers eleven, free to access, learning activities that challenge students to explore different aspects of citizenship in contemporary society and to reflect on academic debates and their own attitudes and behaviours as citizens. Topics include:

- What is meant by global citizenship? (drawing on an approach developed in the 'Open Spaces for Dialogue and Enquiry' educational project recommended in the DfES Citizenship and Diversity Curriculum Review)
- Citizenship, Equality and Diversity, reflecting on the relationship between cultural rights and the demands of citizenship
- New media and citizenship, where students consider the impact of new media technology on citizenship and consider whether the internet is a force for empowerment or disempowerment in contemporary societies.

The Global Dimension website (<http://www.globaldimension.org.uk/>), designed primarily for the

schools curriculum, provides useful resources for the 16+ age range, readily adaptable to volunteering in HE contexts. Resources support students in critically examining their own values and attitudes, appreciating the similarities between peoples everywhere, understanding the global context of their local lives and developing skills that will enable them to combat injustice, prejudice and discrimination.

References

- Andreotti, V. (2006) 'Soft versus critical global citizenship education. Open space for dialogue and enquiry' (available at tinyurl.com/4xa8uhk).
- Caruana, V. (2011) 'The challenge of global citizenship education for the 21st century university: a case for service-learning and community volunteering?', in Clifford, V. and Montgomery, C. (2011) *Moving Towards Internationalisation of the Curriculum for Global Citizenship in Higher Education*, Oxford: OCSLD and CICIN, Oxford Brookes University.
- CPV Web site: www.leedsmet.ac.uk/cpv/
- Dewey, J. (1933) *How We Think. A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process*, revised edn., Boston: D. C. Heath.
- Holdsworth, C. and Quinn, J. (2010) 'Student volunteering in English higher education', *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 35(1), pp. 113-127.
- Jones, E. (2010) "'Don't worry about the worries": transforming lives through international volunteering', in Jones, E. (ed.) *Internationalisation and the Student Voice: higher education perspectives*, New York: Routledge.
- Jones, E. and Caruana, V. (2010) 'Nurturing the global graduate for the 21st century: learning from the student voice on internationalisation', in Jones, E. (ed.) *Internationalisation and the Student Voice: higher education perspectives*, London: Routledge.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984) *Experiential Learning: experience as the source of learning and development*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
- Subedi, B. (2010) 'Reading the world through critical global perspectives', in Subedi, B. (ed.) *Critical Global Perspectives: rethinking knowledge about global societies, USA*: Information Age Publishing.

Viv Caruana is Reader in Internationalisation and Co-Director of CAPRI (Centre for Academic Practice and Research in Internationalisation) at Leeds Metropolitan University.

Open Educational Resources and Practices for All

Thoughts captured during, and shortly after, a short-term SCORE Fellowship

Chrissi Nerantzi, University of Salford

OER: What is it?

Let me start from the yummy strawberry and the motivational poster image created at diy.despair.com/ using a quote shared by Salma Siddique, a colleague from Edinburgh Napier University. The photograph was taken by me and has been uploaded to www.sxc.hu/photo/363020. The final product is a patchwork creation. A mini paper version of this yummy strawberry poster is hanging on my office door, and I have shared it with a few others, but before I finish writing this article and soon after I have completed my short-term SCORE Fellowship at the Support Centre for Open Resources in Education of the Open University, I will share the photograph with a wider audience under one of the six Creative Commons Licences (see creativecommons.org/licenses/). For me, Open Educational Resources (OER) and Open Educational Practices (OEP) are about openness and sharing within and beyond institutional boundaries; about having access to editable resources via open-access repositories; creating resources and programmes with others using open-source and open-access digital tools and social media, and acknowledging contributions under Creative Commons. In a way OER and OEP are about re-using, re-working, re-mixing and re-distributing by working together without trying to re-invent the wheel. Are they time-savers too and do they enable tutors to focus on facilitating learning? And do or should they engage learners more actively with content? Something to think about.



The OER movement, educational opportunities for all, is a philosophy of freely sharing content and resources in digital format now that this is possible through the available technology (see OER timeline at wikieducator.org/OER_timeline). However, the concept and practice of humans sharing ideas, stories, resources in everyday life as well as in education, formal and informal learning, isn't new. The difference today is that technology has the potential to lead to the massification of sharing.

Contextualising OER

I see value in creating and using OER in all disciplines and professional areas (for OER on the go, try the OER search app available at tinyurl.com/3wey4w3), recognising the importance of sharing and collaboration which enables us all to grow, to move forward and to create even greater things.

Too often, though, we focus on the product. We learn so much through the process and this is why I would suggest that there is value in developing OER in partnership with colleagues and students. Academic Developers are agents of and for change. In our job, it is extremely important to model good practice and I feel that it is our responsibility to engage with OER and OEP in our accredited and open staff development provisions in order to enable academics and other professionals who support learning to recognise the value and usefulness of these for their own practice and secure buy-in.

The Academic Development Unit at the University of Salford recently participated in the HEA and JISC-funded collaborative Open Educational Resources for the Inclusive Curriculum (ORIC) Project led by the University of Bradford (tinyurl.com/3e28fx). A series of OER for inclusive teaching and digital literacies has been developed and shared with the wider community. A selection of these OER has been used on our own Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice and specifically during the module 'Curriculum Design and Programme Leadership'. Feedback suggests that staff engaged with the OER and have started exploring the possibilities of using OER with their own students, either ready made, adapted or created from scratch. This is excellent news. The plan is to offer further sessions and webinars to raise awareness of OER and also to trigger and maintain interest and engagement with these. Currently, we are presented with an opportunity to repurpose some of the OER mentioned above and use them for further staff development activities, in particular for activities linked to the HEA-funded project, Developing an Inclusive Culture in Higher Education, and our institutional developmental programme linked to this.

While I embrace and recognise the value of OER and feel that this is the way forward and that OER present a more sustainable solution enabling the wider sharing of resources and expertise with enormous benefits for learners, educators and institutions especially in these difficult and ever-changing times, I can also see the issues and understand why some people are sceptical. Finding, adapting and developing OER requires time, effort and specific skills but also a clear understanding of what OER are and how they can be used effectively. Academic developers and learning technologists work closely together with academics to provide a pedagogical framework for OER, support and guidance. We need to remember that expecting to find the finished and polished product that will work for us as it is, might, in many cases, be an unrealistic expectation. And then, there are issues with the copyright of academic work. It might appear to some that we are leading towards a copyright-free academic world, but do we all embrace this? A mind-shift is needed. Are we (all) ready for this (yet)?

Today, a lot of OER available for Academic Development Activities can be found at tinyurl.com/3h89vlx. A number of Academic Practice OER projects have received funding and this is great news for us all. One of them currently under development is Learning to Teach Inclusively, a multi-media open-access module for HE staff (project page available at tinyurl.com/3k7ww2p) by the University of Wolverhampton

and funded by the HEA and JISC. I am looking forward to the completion of this project later this year to explore which elements we could use for our PgCert or CPD provision as well as for project work and also identify if and how we could contribute to give something back to the OER community.

A recent emergence in our unit is the development of the collaborative open-access module in Flexible, Distance and Online Learning. We hope to be able to design and deliver this module jointly with another institution and make it freely available to anyone beyond institutional barriers in the spirit of OEP.

I hope and wish things will change and we will finally manage to break out of the silo culture. There is a need and desire to collaborate and co-create digital content, curricula and programmes, to share expertise and resources. We have the technology today. We also know how to use the technology effectively. Let's find partners around the globe or in our back garden who share the same passion with us – learning – and work together on OER.

The OER Foundation (wikieducator.org/OERF:Home) and initiatives such as the OER University (wikieducator.org/OER_university) aim to promote the value of open and free educational resources but also the vision of Open Education Practice (opal.innovationpros.net/publications/guide/). The OER Foundation is offering an online open-access short course on OER (see tinyurl.com/437mau6). If you are interested in attending a face-to-face residential programme instead, and would like to apply for a SCORE Fellowship at the Open University, like I did, have a look at www8.open.ac.uk/score/ for the next round. I found it really useful and thought-provoking!

An open invitation

I feel passionate about what can be achieved through OER and there is so much we can do in Academic Development to model good and open practice! I would love to explore some of the opportunities in collaboration with others. If you would be interested to adapt and develop OER together, please get in touch.

Let's share the yummy strawberry! Isn't learning sharing? (Now available in colour at tinyurl.com/3as672y for everybody under Creative Commons.)

Chrissi Nerantzi is an Academic Developer at the University of Salford (c.nerantzi@salford.ac.uk).



The Changing Face of Feedback – how staff are using media-enhanced feedback

Andrew Middleton, Sheffield Hallam University

Academic staff are devising innovative ways of providing their students with feedback on their work by using a range of digital media, as demonstrated by the JISC-funded ASSET benefits realisation project. Whilst the approaches disseminated through the project have successfully engaged students, and have had benefits for academic staff too, reflecting on these innovative methods suggests that the very nature of feedback is changing – by changing the media, we are changing the nature, purpose and impact of feedback.

In this article I introduce media-enhanced feedback with reference to case studies presented through the ASSET project and propose some design principles drawing upon this recent experience of using digital media. I conclude by exploring how the use of different media changes our understanding of feedback.

Introducing media-enhanced feedback

If you are familiar with audio feedback, you will already have some idea of why media-enhanced feedback (MEF) is worth considering. Those who have used it value its capacity to promote rich, personal, timely and meaningful connections between tutors and their students through the recorded word. The term MEF simply extends the focus from audio to embrace other digital media. It also shifts the emphasis to the design of feedback to enhance learning and therefore fits in well with our growing experience of technology-enhanced learning for engaging students effectively.

Examples of media-enhanced feedback

Below, I present some examples of how different media are being used and demonstrate how accessible, easy-to-use digital media is being brought to bear on the challenge of providing effective feedback. Further details can be found in the publication 'Media-enhanced feedback: case studies and methods' (Middleton, 2011), which is available online.

Audio feedback

Audio feedback involves the use of digital audio to distribute formative messages, recorded for individual students or student groups, in response to ongoing or submitted work or as commentary upon other forms of learner activity. Audio feedback often features just the tutor's voice, but peer assessment and self-assessment approaches have been used too.

Clare McCullagh from the University of Reading has used audio feedback with four colleagues and 55 international distance learning students who are studying English writing. The team, like many others, has used the free-to-download recording and editing software, Audacity. She appreciates audio feedback production as a 'low-budget affair' and

notes that her colleagues were surprised by how easy the technology was to use. She believes that the feedback resonated with their students because of its personal nature and its capacity to communicate how the teachers cared about them. Clare believes this led to real impact, with the students following through on the messages and advice they were given. In this case the team also provided a brief written summary sheet in addition to the audio feedback.

Video feedback

The original ASSET project involved partners from the universities of Reading, Plymouth and Staffordshire, and the HEA Subject Centre for Bioscience. As with many others working in this area, their interest in using media for giving feedback was partly driven by the consistently poor rating that the National Student Surveys have given the higher education sector for feedback since the surveys were first run in 2005. ASSET was looking for variety, timeliness and something that would be manageable. Producing feedback in any media can be both time-consuming and frustratingly repetitive – variety was as important for the staff, therefore, as it was for students in this case.

This was all achieved by using simple-to-use and affordable video devices such as Flip cams and web cams. Staff used video in advance of assessments (*i.e.* 'feeding-forward') or in response to completed assignments. As well as delivering rapid generic feedback on assignments, they found that short video clips can create an additional mechanism for initiating dialogue between students and staff, leading to greater learner engagement.

Smartphone feedback

Anne Nortcliffe at Sheffield Hallam University has been using audio and screencast feedback for some time to support Engineering and Computing students. Her initial interest was largely in response to high levels of dyslexia in this subject area – something that affects her too. In recent years she has been looking to simplify her approaches to making MEF, and buying an iPhone for herself is something she describes as 'revolutionary' because of the audio and video recording apps that are available for smartphones. Smartphone ownership amongst her students is high and she says, 'Their use for recording meetings is increasingly viable'. In her discipline much of the feedback she gives is in the form of conversations in the lab and she regularly invites students to record these conversations so that they can reflect on them later.

In providing feedback on submitted work, Anne has found the smartphone allows her to give and immediately return feedback – it's essentially a mobile studio because of its

integrated connectivity. This has meant she can realistically work on student assignments wherever she is, helping her to break the back of marking and getting the feedback to her students in a timely way.

Screencast feedback

Screencasting involves recording a spoken commentary over visual recordings of the user's PC screen. Simple screencasting software is freely available on the web (e.g. jingproject.com or screencast-o-matic.com) and many institutions are investing in software such as Techsmith's Camtasia Studio.

When marking electronically submitted visual work, such as documents, spreadsheets and photographs, it is quite straightforward to make a recording of the tutor's engagement with the submission. Screencasting allows the tutor to expand upon their written annotations and to give feedback on the diagrams, figures, design drawings, tables, graphs and photographs produced by students. In the case of Microsoft Office documents, an additional layer of detailed feedback can be created using the reviewing tools built into the software.

Rod Cullen at Manchester Met has evaluated several media-enhanced techniques, driven to innovate with feedback in response to colleagues expressing their frustration with students who fail to collect the written feedback they have provided. As a teacher on a Post-Graduate Certificate (Pg Cert) and Masters (Pg MA) in Academic Practice, he felt well placed to tackle such issues, especially in relation to online learning. He evaluated several media-enhanced approaches to giving feedback. Cullen highlights the importance of using the right tool for the job. He says, 'Written feedback on such work is not only difficult and time consuming to write, but can often be difficult for students to interpret in relation to their work'.

Screencasting captures the academic's personal engagement with students' work and has the potential, therefore, to communicate important messages powerfully. Because the voice and the focus of the feedback are tied together in the resultant screencast video, this approach can be used to scrutinise students' work in some detail. Conversely, this approach is not as well suited to talking in more general ways about the students' approach to their work.

In my own teaching I have encouraged students to sit down together to view screencast feedback on group project work. In this way the formative effect of feedback is brought to bear in the way it mediates further student engagement in their work.

Other approaches

Other academics are innovating in different ways with these media and others. For example, Voicethread, an online social media tool, was mentioned by several people attending workshops and appears to support peer review well. Chrissi Nerantzi at Salford has been experimenting with iPadio using a smartphone app to support feedback

discussions. Steve Maw has been looking at effective practice in using Personal Response Systems.

Principles

The use of principles for underpinning the effective design of feedback is generally accepted. Nicol and MacFarlane-Dick's seven principles, for example, provide a clear and much-cited framework (2006). However, there are some principles that underpin the use of digital media too, and these can help to ensure that the technology does not get the better of us. Based upon the recent experience of practitioners reporting at ASSET events, the following guiding principles are suggested:

- the purpose of MEF is likely to be different from written feedback because the recorded voice allows the academic to engage the learner in different ways from the written word
- the use of voice is often more effective when the message is direct, brief, clear and appealing to the listener or listening group. Voice allows feedback to be communicated with a clarity that is often hard to achieve in the written word, even when time for providing feedback is limited. Therefore spoken feedback should make particularly good use of the expressive qualities in the way we speak
- detailed and complex messages can often be expressed more clearly with visual support, *i.e.* text, photographs, graphical devices, video, referenced annotation. Screencast and video feedback, for example, can support detailed feedback in this way
- the recorded voice is suited to emphasising key points, and to motivating, orientating, and challenging the learner, and for encouraging them to take time to reflect on their work
- a variety of complementary media used either concurrently or over time can encourage greater learner engagement with, and appreciation of, feedback
- the availability of portable devices for capturing formative conversations and personal reflections means that more consideration can be given to the nature and timeliness of feedback in terms of the situations in which it is made, used, reused and shared
- the ubiquity of personal technology means it is realistic to expect any stakeholder to offer feedback, anywhere. Stakeholders include tutors, student peers and mentors, the students themselves, employers and supervisors, and other formally or informally involved critical friends
- the effect of feedback on the learner can be different each time it is reviewed. This may affect the way it is designed, implemented and stored
- communication is effective when the recipient is clear about what they are receiving and how they can best use it. Good MEF will usually begin with a suitable personal introduction that enables the learner to take appropriate action.

Is that feedback?

If the National Student Survey suggests that students don't get enough feedback in a timely way, many academic staff rightly respond that often it's just that students don't recognise the

feedback that they do get or that they don't collect it when it is produced. So it is important to address this in terms of MEF, and the simple response is to tell students 'This is feedback' – to educate them about what feedback at university looks (and sounds!) like. This is particularly important with MEF, because it is likely that feedback looks different from any preconceived ideas that they may have.

More than this, the feedback is developing – by changing the media, we are communicating differently:

- MEF models dialogue – when we talk we do not talk into voids, we are talking to people. Talking to people assumes response and interactivity. It doesn't make sense, therefore, to view MEF in isolation and outside of the context of an ongoing dialogue, wherever our students are located
- MEF is about personal connection – there are things that can be said to each other that can't be easily written. As Clare McCullough points out, we care about our students more than they may realise!
- MEF can be immediate and situated – the smartphone, Flip camera, or audio recorder can accompany us and our students as they act and think, and as we observe and interact. Ultimately this means that immediate feedback can be generated easily to promote reflective learner engagement and the greater use of innovative, authentic and experiential pedagogy.

By looking at the principles set out earlier, it is possible to find other ways in which the nature, purpose and impact of feedback change due to the introduction of digital media. If, as Rod Cullen says, academic staff are sometimes frustrated that students don't pick up the feedback they have taken care to provide, it is worth reconsidering the form that feedback takes, how and when it is accessed, and how its purpose is communicated. This has to be done with

consideration for the effort that is involved in giving the feedback – after all, there is a limit to what can be realistically done. However, it seems that the impact of MEF on learner engagement, and possibly on what and how students learn, warrants more time if, indeed, more time is even needed.

In contrast to the sometimes under-appreciated written feedback, feedback needs to be designed to hold the learner's attention and needs to be perceived as being indispensable. Time-based media is well suited to this and therefore to promoting interactivity and deeper engagement.

References

Middleton, A. (2011) 'Media-enhanced feedback: case studies and methods', papers produced to support the Media-Enhanced Feedback event, Sheffield, 27 October 2010, ASSET and MELSIG (online at: tinyurl.com/3svh87r).

Nicol, D. J. and Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006) 'Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: a model and seven principles of good feedback practice', *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2) pp. 199-218.

Useful resources

'A Word in Your Ear' audio feedback conference papers: research.shu.ac.uk/lti/awordinyourear2009

ASSET project website: www.reading.ac.uk/asset

Audacity recording and editing software: audacity.sourceforge.net

Jing free online screencasting software: www.jingproject.com

Media Enhanced Learning Special Interest Group: www.melsig.com

Screencast-o-matic free online screencasting software: www.screencast-o-matic.com

'Sounds Good' national audio feedback project: sites.google.com/site/soundsgooduk

Voicethread free online social media software: www.voicethread.com

Andrew Middleton is a Faculty Member of the Learning and Teaching Institute at Sheffield Hallam University (a.j.middleton@shu.ac.uk).

... continued from page 28

when making judgements about whether something is fair or not, and I found the sections on groupwork and exams particularly interesting. Also of relevance to all higher education staff is the section in which the authors outline from their research what they believe constitutes skilful teachers and effective assessors.

No surprises in the next chapter, where the authors talk about how students respond to unfair assessment, since practitioners in higher education will recognise them all, although perhaps not offering the level of insight which the authors provide. Students adopt various survival strategies, or choose from a range of actions to cope with perceived unfairness, while a third group simply opt out of the course, the programme or the university.

In the final chapter, readers are given helpful thoughts on the student views of assessment, before the authors provide really pragmatic and helpful recommendations for course coordinators, teachers and universities overall. This chapter

should be required reading not only for all lecturers studying on postgraduate certificates in higher education, but also all Pro-Vice-Chancellors and Deputy Vice-Chancellors who manage assessment processes and quality assurers who monitor and validate them.

Quite simply, this is the most energising and valuable book on assessment I have read in a very long time. Its scope is very broad, and there is much here about teaching and learning as well as about assessment that rings true. There is some repetition in the book, and in some places the origins of the text in a PhD thesis are evident. I might also perhaps have wanted to see more in the way of conclusions at the end of the book – but perhaps this was just me being reluctant to come to the end of such a rattling good read!

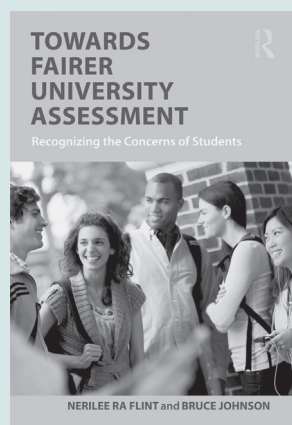
Sally Brown is Emeritus Professor at Leeds Metropolitan University, Adjunct Professor at the University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, and Visiting Professor at the University of Plymouth.

Book Review

Towards Fairer University Assessment: recognizing the concerns of students

by Nerilee Ra Flint and Bruce Johnson

Routledge: 2011



When reviewing a book, if I find myself itching to transcribe sections of the text to use immediately in my presentations and workshops, it's generally a very good sign. I read the vast majority of this book on a single very long rail journey, and found I literally could not bear to put it down. Other passengers might well have been annoyed or perturbed to hear me saying, 'Yes, quite right, that's how it is indeed' at regular intervals.

The genesis of this book is a PhD thesis written by Nerilee Ra Flint, with Bruce Johnson as her supervisor. The foreword is by Liz McDowell, who acted as the external examiner for Nerilee's doctorate. Having examined a few PhDs in my time, I would agree with Liz that it's very rare that a doctoral thesis makes a good book, but like her, I think this is a very honourable exception.

The study which took place over three years privileged the student view of what fairness in university assessment looks like. Using a grounded-theory approach, she listened to 34 students talking about their conceptions of fairness and unfairness, sometimes using vignettes (which incidentally would make the basis of a cracking workshop task for students, for anyone interested in assessment) to elicit their thoughts.

The structure of the book is very straightforward. The authors discuss first of all the importance of fair assessment, and then describe in detail the qualitative approach that they took in developing their theory centred round 'demonstrating capability'.

Next, they looked at what kinds of things really frustrate students in the assessment process, and lead them to believe that practices are unfair. Reading this chapter was where I became really excited, because the verbatim quotes used to illustrate points convey so clearly and vividly many of the issues that university staff often raise with me in workshops.

In the following chapter, they explore what students consider

continued on page 27 ...

SEDA News

SEDA Fellowships Scheme: updates

- Dr Shân Wareing FSEDA has been appointed to the role of Fellowships Co-ordinator. Shân will be responsible for all aspects of the new framework: providing leadership; managing aspects of the scheme; maintaining it in good standing and making recommendations on its further development.
- Dr Celia Popovic FSEDA has been appointed to the role of Programme Leader for the new Supporting and Leading Educational Change (SLEC) course.
- The 12-week online SLEC course, which confers eligibility for Fellowship of SEDA, will run from 31 October 2011. Further details are available on the SEDA website.

New SEDA Blog

- Keep up to date with SEDA and its Co-chair Julie Hall at <http://seda-julie.blogspot.com/>, where Julie will be posting regular updates.

Events

- The programme for the 16th Annual SEDA Conference, 'Using Technology to Enhance Learning' (17-18 November 2011, Birmingham) has been published and bookings for the conference are now being taken at www.seda.ac.uk.

SEDA Grants

- Remember to check the 'Research' section of the website for updates on previous SEDA Grants, as we regularly add project reports to the site.

SEDA Executive

- SEDA recently welcomed two new members to its Executive Committee: Yaz El Hakim AFSEDA from the University of Winchester and Clara Davies from the University of Leeds.
- Caroline Stainton has joined Julie Hall as SEDA Co-Chair and Mike Laycock has moved into the role of Vice-Chair.

SEDA Administration

Roz Grimmitt, the SEDA Administrator, is on extended leave from September 2011 until June 2012. During that time, Silvia Sovic (s.sovic@seda.ac.uk) will take on the role of SEDA Administrator and we are very pleased to welcome her to the SEDA team.