

# EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

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## From Postgraduate Certificates... To embedding UKPSF at all levels

*Reporting back from SEDA Workshops in London, Edinburgh and Birmingham*

**Liz Shrives**, HE Consultant

In the SEDA Paper *Embedding CPD in Higher Education* (Laycock and Shrives, 2009), I reflected on how professional development has increasingly become an accepted part of being a professional in higher education and the significant changes that had happened following the Dearing Report (1997) and the subsequent HEFCE Teaching and Quality Enhancement Funding (see the HEGC and CHEMS evaluation, 2005). This was particularly evident in the area of 'initial' training and development through Postgraduate Certificates in Learning and Teaching in HE for staff with teaching and learning support roles. These programmes are now commonplace and, in the vast majority of institutions, it is an expectation, or a mandatory requirement, for staff to undertake such a programme on entry to a teaching or learning support role.

The majority of these programmes are accredited by the Higher Education Academy against the UK Professional Standards for Teaching (UKPSF), but following the review of the UKPSF and the launch of a revised framework in 2011, institutions are looking to develop more comprehensive institutionally-focused opportunities for the professional development of their staff. Current thinking about these established programmes and the professional development needs of all staff quickly gives rise to questions about effective ways of providing opportunities for staff at all levels within an institution, and the challenges arising from the different values and language associated with the different aspects of the teaching function across an institution. How to develop a coherent and equitable structure and processes and how to use the UKPSF to support both institutional priorities and individual needs to ultimately enhance the experience of students lay heavily on our minds. Our thinking is at the point of taking provision beyond an opportunity for those staff just entering the profession to acknowledging the potential benefits gained from a coherent and strategic institution-wide approach.

SEDA provided the opportunity for colleagues to come together to explore how institutions can move this thinking forwards in a series of workshops recently held in London, Edinburgh and Birmingham. Over 70 delegates spent each day sharing what we have learned from running Postgraduate Certificate programmes, assessing current approaches emerging in the sector and exploring ideas about how the UKPSF can be used within the context and culture of their own institutions.

The workshops were structured around three simple questions: where are we at the moment, what have we learned, and how do we meet the current challenges

**SEDA Supporting and Leading Educational Change**

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of engaging all staff with UKPSF? This article attempts to capture some of the ideas and discussion points arising from the three workshops.

### Where are we at the moment?

Postgraduate Certificates supporting learning and teaching in HE are mature and well-established programmes and there is, as identified by the delegates in the three groups, a range of positive outcomes to celebrate. Discussions from the groups identified the success of programmes in:

- bringing people together and providing a community of practice – even if this is not a tangible outcome the ‘sense’ of a community of practice was valued
- being increasingly accepted as providing an institutionally focused academic programme
- being accessible for different groups of people
- raising the status and scholarship of learning and teaching and academic development
- providing dedicated time for participants to focus on the development of their scholarship and practice in teaching and learning
- being legitimate and recognised both by the institution and nationally through accreditation by the HE Academy
- providing an opportunity to reflect, promote and challenge what is good about teaching in the institution
- being congruent with the institutional identity, mission and vision with regard to learning and teaching and the student learning experience.

Delegates felt that over time there was growing evidence in their institutions of a positive impact of the Postgraduate Certificates on practitioners, but they are acutely aware that evidence at a local level is difficult to gather.

The climate has changed from the time when Certificate programmes were originally adopted as the most effective means of developing staff new to teaching in HE. The key influencing factors and drivers have changed and there is pressure to re-establish the needs of all staff who teach and support learning and for institutions to identify and develop the most efficient and cost-effective ways of meeting those needs. This is alongside meeting the institutional and sector needs.

The current key factors and challenges were identified by the groups as:

- Decreasing resources
- Increasing demand through greater numbers of staff from different roles wanting to be qualified
- The culture of accountability and the demands for ‘proof’ of teaching excellence and statistics about staff capability (HESA data)
- Uncertainty about what is happening in the sector and the impact on institutions
- Working with the full UKPSF and having responsibility for recognition decisions
- The demand for professional development to be offered through new modes of learning and the challenges of facilitating online and technology-enhanced professional learning
- Working with top-down criteria for promotion, probation, appraisal and other institutional initiatives focusing on teaching
- Fitting into institution-wide awards structures (for teaching)
- The portability of what can be achieved through an institutional-based scheme.

### What have we learned?

The role of educational development in higher education institutions over time has not been smooth and consistent, experiencing highs and lows and different iterations (Gosling, 2008). Despite this, Postgraduate Certificate programmes have an established position in developing learning and teaching and academic practice. Alongside this is a growing body of academic work to help us understand the multifaceted nature of educational and academic development. We have an increased conceptual understanding and research and scholarship in many areas: approaches to academic staff development from Land, the processes of

educational change from Bamber and Trowler, and the professional contexts of learning from Eraut and Knight. We have also explored the nature of professional development, its relationship to the UKPSF and to the broader established work concerning organisational development.

This is available for us to draw upon in the context of a changing landscape of academic development defined by increasing sector-wide capability and understanding. This is associated with a greater strategic approach and where professional development is becoming increasingly valued and understood as professional practice.

## The challenges

It appears that the current challenges for institutions are largely related to the wider political context and particularly to the implications of the White Paper on student numbers, fees and the potential changing nature of students. Although uncertain, delegates felt that the major impact on them was the need now to try to position themselves to respond quickly to changes in institutional identity and the resultant impact on the relationship between Research and Teaching in their institution.

Many delegates reported that their institutions are rethinking the professional development opportunities they are able to provide in the context of decreasing resource and increasing accountability. The resultant challenge is to provide opportunities that extended beyond a PGCert for all staff to engage with and demonstrate the UKPSF, but with a diminishing resource base. There was also concern about the impact of these changes over time and the development needs of academic staff through their changing roles and identity. New approaches will be required to meet the changing nature of engagement, the potentially different perceptions of value and relevance of professional development, and the ever-increasing and often competing pressures of the job. How to support preparedness for change, the focus on academic leadership and high levels of accountability were also identified as challenges.

In addressing these challenges an institution must consider the fundamental question 'What does this institution want to achieve through extending its professional development provision beyond that of postgraduate certificates or masters programmes modules?' The key drivers identified by the groups included the need to:

- provide CPD for all groups of staff (not just staff new to teaching or supporting learning in HE) in order to be able to develop quality learning and teaching for students
- provide credible HESA data on staff qualifications
- have a scheme which can be accredited by the HEA, enabling the institution to recognise their own staff against UKPSF
- demonstrate value and cost efficiencies
- draw together all activities concerned with reward, recognition, enhancement of teaching and teaching practices using one coherent framework
- develop a cross-institutional framework which encompasses shared values and principles owned and valued by the whole institution.

## How to use what we have learned: Current trends in development of provision

Identifying how to provide appropriate professional development opportunities for staff within an institution is complex and achieving a cross-institutional impact is especially difficult in large devolved organisations. At the SEDA workshops four institutions with established Postgraduate Certificate programmes made presentations of the progress they had made in their developing new approaches to CPD, all of which embed the UKPSF.

Jo Peat from Roehampton University explained how the challenges experienced through institution change and reorganisation had resulted in them rethinking and repositioning the Postgraduate Certificate (part of a Masters programme) for staff new to teaching in HE. The University has replaced the PGCert with a stand-alone, one-year, non-credit-bearing University Certificate run by the central Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit. This is accredited against Descriptor 2 of UKPSF and leads to HEA Fellowship. Participants are less concerned about the lack of academic credit. The team delivering the programme have seen a number of benefits. These are:

- the ability to adapt the content and delivery of the programme to fit with developments in the field without going through all the University quality control structures
- establishing their own deadlines, rather than these being determined by University structures
- greater flexibility with the design of the course
- there is no longer a tension between an MA academic expectation and the more beneficial deep reflection/commitment to professional development
- to have their own exam boards, with an external advisor, to suit their time frames, not those established by taught degree courses
- using a pass/fail basis, so marking the work is more straightforward.

The Certificate forms part of a wider provision for staff to evidence the UKPSF. Successful completion of the SEDA PDF Introduction to Supporting Learning and Teaching enables staff to gain D1, and Descriptor 2 is evidenced either through the University Certificate or an individual route for experienced staff which is supported by a series of workshops. There may be those in the sector who feel that stepping outside the academic credit arena is 'dumbing down', but the comments made by the external on the programme suggest otherwise:

*'The standards attained by the students whose work I read were high – at least as high as those on the two other courses I work with at the moment (one a specialist college, the other a Russell Group institution) and in some cases higher.'*

Three other case studies from universities were presented at the workshops. These illustrated developments of cross-institutional frameworks which incorporated 60-credit Postgraduate Certificates and which contain 'routes' for staff with different experience and qualifications to evidence the UKPSF. Interesting aspects of these developments were

the way they have been developed collegially with Human Resources departments. This enabled them to incorporate wider teaching and learning functions and to build on a wider range of activities currently operating in the institution.

Sally Bradley from Sheffield Hallam University explained that it had been a long process to develop and implement a University professional development policy and framework – she had been working on it since 2009. Their recently accredited framework integrates formal development opportunities with the processes of appraisal and peer-supported review, together with a new cross-institution initiative to enhance research and scholarship in teaching. The university and student-led teaching awards also link into the framework. The framework incorporates existing professional development activities including: the Postgraduate Certificate, the associate lecturers, research supervisors and research examiners programmes, e-learning training, and the programme of faculty-based learning and teaching seminars. Participants on the scheme are supported through appraisal and the institutional peer-supported review scheme. When an individual wishes to seek recognition against the UKPSF they produce a reflective account of their development with an annotated CV and supporting references. This is assessed by the University CPD Panel.

The ‘Aspire’ (Accrediting Staff Professionalism In Research-Led Education) Framework at the University of Exeter was accredited by the Higher Education Academy in January 2012 and was one of the first frameworks to be accredited against the revised UKPSF. Dilly Fung, who worked on the development of the scheme throughout, explained that the university-wide scheme was a result of high-level university engagement and a joint approach from the Education Enhancement Unit, academics and Human Resources. Dialogue with colleagues in other HE institutions, including UEL, Durham, University College Falmouth and the University of Southampton, was instrumental in the development of the framework.

Aspire has been developed on a set of principles (see Figure 1) and provides a framework, or a ‘set of related opportunities’ for developing and accrediting staff who teach and support students’ learning in the research-led

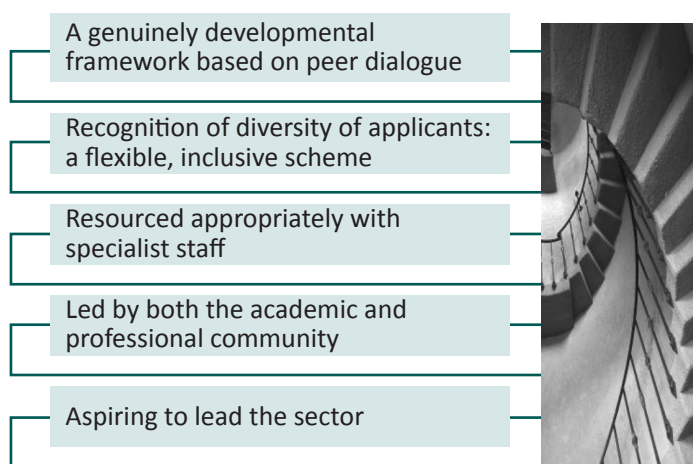


Figure 1 Principles of ASPIRE at Exeter

environment of Exeter University. It offers the opportunity to gain both a University of Exeter Aspire Fellowship and the correlating HEA Fellowship at either Associate, Fellow, Senior Fellow or Principal Fellow levels. Key features of the scheme are that:

*‘It stimulates individual and group development through peer dialogue, and through the sharing of good practice’ and ‘promotes critical engagement with higher education-related literature, especially literature informed by the scholarship of teaching and learning, and with peer review.’ (Extracts from the Aspire Handbook)*

Within the framework clear links are articulated between the formal initial development programme of the Postgraduate Certificate and the Learning and Teaching in HE programme (for staff with limited teaching roles). There is an expectation that on completion of a programme, individuals will then engage with the Aspire CPD Framework to continue with their development. Aspire responds sensitively to the demands of a research-led institution and to the generally held notion of professional development within this context. Whilst doing this there is implicit encouragement to open up the dialogue and debate about teaching and learning through the Framework assessment process. This process requires individuals to present a written or an oral case for Fellowship at the appropriate descriptor and extensive feedback is always provided. An application is reviewed by an Assessment and Accreditation Panel convened by the College or the University.

Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) has been working to develop a framework called ‘Thinking Differently’ and Alison Nimmo, from Learning Enhancement and Academic Development, shared the progress of the scheme at the Edinburgh workshop. The GCU Framework, like Sheffield Hallam and Exeter, is cross-institutional but is designed specifically ‘to develop innovative teaching and learning within the institution and further afield’. It has a strong strategic aim to change the awareness of and engagement with the UKPSF in order to achieve an institutional target of 75% of staff achieving recognition against UKPSF by 2015.

‘Thinking Differently’ has been developed by Learning Enhancement and Academic Development in conjunction with University Human Resources. They used Buchanan and McCalman’s (1989) perpetual transition management model of transformational change to develop the framework and take it forward into the implementation phase.

The Framework is based on a model of distributive leadership with a key set of principles. These are to:

- Develop capability for engaging in and leading innovation in learning and teaching across all levels of the teaching community
- Support a cascading model of CPD and encourage the development of reflective teachers
- Value leadership based on action (action research) not job titles.

This is achieved through building on and refreshing current CPD opportunities which are already familiar to staff and,

as with Sheffield Hallam, developing new activities and approaches such as online and collaborative ventures to complement these.

The staff at GCU greatly value the opportunity to gain academic credit, therefore all relevant credit-bearing programmes, including the Postgraduate Certificate, are encompassed in the framework. In addition, opportunities are available for participants to gain credit for the evidence gathered outside the formal programmes. This means that the team is revising current programmes to ensure they fit coherently into the Framework and appropriately cover the relevant dimensions of the UKPSF.

### Emergent thinking

In all of the case studies it is evident that the process of building or moving towards a cross-instructional framework that relates to (and in the majority of cases encompasses) the formal postgraduate programmes is grounded in a set of underpinning principles. Generic examples of relevant statements of 'Principles' might include to:

- simultaneously meet personal, professional and institutional objectives
- have active support from staff, management and unions
- recognise the competing demands from teaching, administration and research
- be collegial in emphasis, promoting a developmental and supportive ethos
- recognise the depth and breadth of activities that constitute and support professional development
- integrate where possible and appropriate the requirements of UKPSF, other professional standards and professional bodies
- build on current structures and recognised professional activities.

The Principles form one of three elements which assist the development of a framework and which need to be considered alongside a statement of Expectations. These articulate what the institution expects individuals to be doing

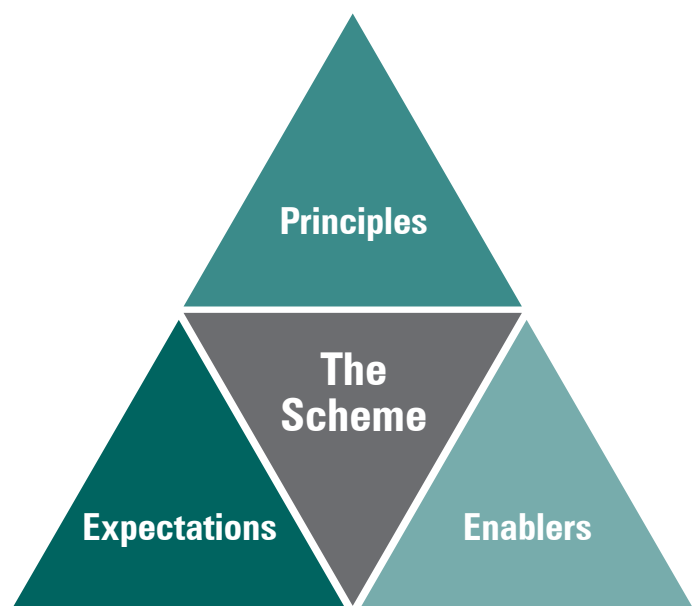


Figure 2 Institutional scheme framework

or working towards. The third element is the Enablers, which indicate how this might be done and what opportunities are being made available. These three elements provide the outline structure of an institutional scheme or framework (see Figure 2).

### The experience of developing a framework

A strong message emerging from all the case studies is that any development of an outline structure should be through collaboration. A team with strategic influence including representatives from Human Resources and the senior management of the institution is essential to achieve 'joined up' thinking and cross-institutional involvement and commitment. Dilly Fung reflected on her experience of developing the Exeter University Aspire Scheme:

*'Be under no illusions – time, money and collaborative strategic planning are needed to do this well and that stepping out into the unknown – inventing from scratch takes creative energy.'*

Other key success criteria identified during the workshops were:

- Align and link the framework proposals with as many teaching and learning activities and processes in the institution as possible. This might include promotion, probation, teaching awards, bids and grants etc. A development on this scale will take time and might require a phased development and implementation plan
- Recognise the importance of a common understanding of the language of UKPSF in the institution and across partners. This should manifest itself through the complete teaching and learning infrastructure including promotion, awards, mechanisms to support teaching and learning etc.
- Encompass and address the relevant strategic priorities of the institution
- Recognise the nature of change within your organisations and that this may be different in different institutional cultures. Know your institution and support the process of change accordingly
- Get 'buy-in' from managers and keep them involved in the process
- Create a culture of expectation, high standards, commitment and coherence
- Get committed, effective and confident leadership
- Effective communication is vital, internally and externally
- Employ a team approach and a genuine commitment to ongoing evaluation and change
- Give the scheme a name and a distinctive identity.

Reflections on the experiences of implementing frameworks identified a number of challenges.

It was considered to be really important to understand which current development opportunities offered in institutions worked well and which were particularly valued by staff. This understanding benefited the teams in a number of ways, not least by enabling them to identify the things that could be stopped, leaving them to focus limited resource on activities that worked. In addition it provided a sound platform for further developments.

Making use of external input was valuable in the developmental stages in helping to keep models and frameworks simple and focused. The role of an external also proved to be valuable in supporting the early experiences of teams or panels with the responsibility of making recognition judgements. Their support in facilitating dialogue about standards, sufficiency and the different approaches to presenting evidence, in addition to assuring the decision-making processes, had been essential.

Ongoing communication across all levels of the institution and a concerted effort to raise the profile in departments, schools and faculties were essential in raising awareness and promoting the potential benefits of the scheme or framework. Identifying people who would act as champions or advocates, especially former participants on programmes, took time but made a significant impact.

One of the most significant challenges to teams had been around what constitutes evidence of professional development and how this can be judged against the UKPSF. The greatest difficulty was making decisions about the volume and sufficiency of evidence, particularly when presented in different formats. There was a real tension between written and oral presentation. Other aspects where the process had been difficult were where teams had to judge evidence from senior staff, in different disciplines and at the different descriptors. It was recognised that in many institutions the process is relatively new and that there is a degree of capacity building happening. This can be done through the use of experienced staff (internal or external) and by incorporating opportunities for staff to develop their capability in making judgements through their involvement in the process. A panel might therefore be a mix of experienced and less-experienced staff who will be involved in a dialogue about any decision made followed by an interrogation of that decision and the rationale for it. Guidance notes are available on the Academy website designed to develop

understanding about the nature of evidence appropriate for each UKPSF descriptor.

And finally – the importance of detailed and clear guidance for all those involved or participating in a framework cannot be overestimated. Guidance should cover the detail of the processes within the Framework, expectations about evidence, including what counts as evidence, details of opportunities for development and how individuals can be recognised. Many universities have their guidance notes or framework handbooks on their websites so it is always worthwhile seeking them out!

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to Alison Nimmo from Glasgow Caledonian University, Dilly Fung from Exeter University, Sally Bradley from Sheffield Hallam and Jo Peat from Roehampton University for their contribution to the workshops and their willingness to share their hard work.

To view the workshop presentations on the SEDA web site, see [tinyurl.com/ctsvwfu](http://tinyurl.com/ctsvwfu).

## Materials

Aspire Scheme Guidance Pack ([tinyurl.com/cjne355](http://tinyurl.com/cjne355)).

Higher Education Academy (2011) 'The United Kingdom's Professional Standards Framework' ([www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf)).

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# What's in the SHED? – An Appreciation of Educational Development in Scotland – Past and Present

**Stuart Boon**, University of Strathclyde, **David Ross**, University of the West of Scotland, **Darren Comber**, University of Aberdeen, and **Bob Matthew**, University of Stirling

In a previous article in *Educational Developments* (8.7, 2007), a group of educational developers from Scottish Universities looked at the whole concept of quality enhancement as it applied to the Scottish sector. In this, we concluded that we, as a

community of educational developers, had taken an active role in the development and promulgation of the concept of 'quality enhancement' (of the student learning experience) through a variety of means including the development of the Scottish

Funding Council's Enhancement Themes concept, which has now been running for 10 years (QAA, 2012).

This article focuses on our successes and failures as a community (with the emphasis on that word) of staff

dedicated to the cause of raising the skills and awareness of effective pedagogy amongst our institutional colleagues and how we are dealing with an ever-changing landscape. We see ourselves as central to the overall enhancement process and in acting as conduits, frontiers-persons, filters, agents of change (call us what you will) to ensure we keep ever-busy (and getting busier) colleagues up to speed on all sorts of agenda.

The Scottish higher education institutions number around 20 and on many fronts we are a small enough sector to have an active collegial and united approach to developments – in many ways we are a ‘community’. This manifests itself for instance in approaches to lobbying governments (north and south of the border) over issues such as research, funding, wider access. Nothing special in that, but what is different from the approach in the rest of the UK sector is that we can speak much more easily with one voice, despite being every bit as diverse (we range from over 600 years old to ‘new kids on the block’ who have been universities for less than five years). It is also important to note that the Scottish Funding Council (SFC, 2012) has a remit from the Scottish Executive (the posh name for our devolved parliament!) to ‘Promote Further and Higher Education’. This overall sector-wide approach is also true of the relationships between the main players in the form of Universities Scotland, QAA (Scotland), the Scottish Funding Council, the HEA, SPARQS and the NUS.

Where does the educational development community fit in? Officially, the Heads of the various educational development units around the Scottish HE institutions sit on a sub-committee of the Universities Scotland Learning and Teaching Committee and our collective deliberations go forward to the main meeting through our convenor and the minutes from meetings. The group of us writing this article consist of two ‘old lag convenors’, and two ‘young bucks’ – the current convenor and the ‘Convenor-elect’.

We even have an official remit in this:

The purpose of the sub-committee will be to promote the quality of student learning through:

- developing, promoting and disseminating good practice in curriculum design and delivery, and in assessment, by running events and producing materials
- promoting good practice in the development of full- and part-time teaching staff, and of research staff, support staff and students when they are fulfilling a teaching role
- considering and promoting issues associated with research and scholarship carried out in support of teaching and learning
- maintaining an awareness of developments in teaching and learning
- liaising with other (Universities Scotland) Staff Development Committee sub-committees and other groups on areas of mutual interest.

That’s our formal commitment to Universities Scotland. As such we have been moderately successful in having our voice heard and in influencing, for instance, some of the early work on the pioneering Quality Enhancement Framework that operates across our sector and guides our overall approach to institutional quality assurance and enhancement.

So what about our informal activities? Our regular formal meetings as a group have always been a great opportunity for sharing and networking on a more informal level – despite our differences demographically and in mission, many of the issues facing higher education in Scotland are the same for us all, especially when it comes to working as a community of educational developers. Additionally, over the past decade or so we have built a reputation across the UK sector for forming small sub-sets of the whole group of educational developers to bid for and receive funding for ‘hands-on’ research and development projects – these originate through our many informal contacts built up through the work of the sub-committee. For

example projects such as Student Enhanced Learning through Effective Feedback (SENLEF, 2004), Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Research (SHEER, 2007), Professional Recognition of Methods of Promoting Teaching and Enhancing Learning (PROMOTE) (McArthur *et al.*, 2004) – well, if nothing else, you have got to admit we got good acronym practice! There were also several instances of early scoping work on the aforementioned Scottish Enhancement Themes in which we talked to practitioners and students about their needs in these areas – so much better to get the views from the ‘chalkface’ as well as all the strategic stuff!

We frequently offered (even sometimes we were listened to!) consultative comments on a wide range of national issues including HEA development, the order and number of annual Scottish Enhancement Themes and the evaluation of the QEF. We lobbied hard and won our case for better recognition of the HEA in Scotland. All of these (and others) brought such small groups together and produced work that has been disseminated nationally and internationally. All of this strengthened the informal and formal nature of our interactivity.

Whilst we have been moderately successful and happy as a one-person-per-institution ‘committee’ of Universities Scotland, we wanted more! As part of the Enhancement Theme on Flexible Provision, at a time when small sums of money were available for development projects related to the theme, a small group of us pondered on how we as Educational Developers could demonstrate possible ways forward. We submitted a bid for what was essentially a Learning Objects Repository; this bid was successful and the result was SHEDLOADS (they just get worse, these pesky acronyms!), a website that was populated by resources from our community.

### Building our SHED

Several years ago, at the time of the formation of the ILTHE and the Generic Centre (now that’s going back to another century!) we invited

Brenda Smith (of the then Generic Centre) to be a member of the formal educational development group. This was done so that we could be better informed about what was happening and also since the Generic Centre was for us (as a UK-wide community of educational developers), so that we could tap into its resources. This led to two of the Group being appointed as LTSN Generic Centre Associates and also allowed us to tap into funding for Scotland-specific projects (remember Scotland had no TLTP or FDTL funding – but we are not complaining... grrrrrrrr!).

At roughly the same time, the precursor of the current Scottish Funding Council launched what it called the ScotCIT initiative (ScotCIT, 2001) and many of us were involved in this initiative which led to outcomes such as the Effective Lecturing Resource Pack for Staff Development (ELRSD) (Matthew *et al.*, 2001), and the NetCulture project (NetCulture, 2001). The latter was a project across all Scottish HEIs to try and develop a community of practice amongst those involved in e-learning. Whilst not a complete success it got our community thinking about how to better address our development needs.

Another initiative was taken by the then convenor and in-coming new convenor, to try and provide development opportunities for ourselves. So we decided to hold an annual conference just for us and the first one was held at Sabhal Mor Ostaig (Scottish Gaelic College, part of UHI) on the Isle of Skye – a long way and a bit of a luxury but well worth the trip if you like mountains and midges (and frequent mists!) The location turned out to be the hottest place in the UK that first day and we had such a good and fruitful time that we went back for a second time...but (you've guessed it) the rain was horizontal across the Sound of Sleat, such is the Scottish weather! The two experiences convinced us that this was a great medium for enhancing our collegiality as well as being good for sharing our experiences on an informal platform – could we do still more? Within the blink of an eye we decided collectively to 'reinvent' ourselves as a wider

community of educational developers by including our institutional educational development teams and other interested practitioners to better share our practice. We decided to take the name SHED from the previous project – (you can workout what it stands for, we did!) and put flashy images of your average B&Q 6x4 wooden garden shed (fully treated for the Skye weather) on our newly revamped website (<http://shedscotland.wordpress.com/>).

Whilst we never set out to create an enlarged community of practice *per se*, but, knowing that the idea of what defines 'educational development' can span a broad church, we took an active decision to try and expand our network and bring colleagues from allied areas into our conversations. This was started by opening out our annual two-day meeting on the Isle of Skye to a wider, invited audience by simply asking colleagues in our network to 'bring a friend to Skye'. Starting with e-learning specialists, we then included colleagues old and new in a wider SHED email list and have now gone on to include academic colleagues in Schools and Departments and colleagues from careers, student learning services and other areas in our universities whose remit and function overlaps with ours, officially or informally. Our annual summer meetings (still in Skye) have turned into almost 'proper' short conferences, and these remain one of the highlights of the year, where we have the chance to hear others' approaches to working with, supporting and developing others in our institutions. Recent summer events and topics have focused on *Internationalisation* (2009), *Lecturers for the 21st Century* (2010) and *Reframing Educational Development: One Size Doesn't Fit All* (2011). We have supplemented our good practice sharing with whisky tasting, the perennial quiz night and the odd hike up a local big hill (midges in tow!).

The expanded community now has an active series of meetings throughout the year, using mornings to focus on formal Universities Scotland business, but inviting colleagues from the wider SHED community to take part in

afternoon CPD and good practice-sharing sessions, on topics ranging from student inclusion and partnerships through to the implications of the revised UKPSF. These discussions maximise the value we get from travelling to a meeting, and provide much needed space to discuss topics of mutual interest in an informal setting and free (albeit far too briefly) from the pressures of the 'ranch' back home.

### Pottering in your SHED can bring benefits

The storm-clouds gather and where better to be than in your shed, in the dry and warmth, having a wee 'potter'. We are facing an era of increasing scrutiny, and with institutions becoming increasingly inward-facing as money gets tighter, we are frequently quizzed as to whether spending time away from our universities is time well spent.

Emphatically – YES! Our community in Scotland has been proactive in driving a series of projects and initiatives which, without the goodwill and trust generated through our community, would never have happened otherwise. These have taken place without significant funding, with just small amounts provided as a result of partnership working with (for example) the Higher Education Academy and the Quality Assurance Agency. And... no NTFS or CETLs (but we are not complaining – again!).

Examples:

1. Using small-scale funding provided by Academy Scotland, we have been able to organise, host and in many cases use our own expertise to run day-long events aimed at boosting the capabilities of staff interested in exploring or improving their skills in pedagogic research methods. We have run or been involved in events annually since 2007, with events focusing on research methods, research interviews and research in the social sciences.
2. Over the past 18 months we have been undertaking a Scotland-wide survey of pedagogic research that is taking place in our institutions,



usually in informal ways, without mainstream funding, and by those who might not see this type of research as their mainstream activity. This provides the opportunity to put colleagues in touch with others in similar positions, who perhaps didn't see themselves as anything other than 'lone wolves', and grow new areas of interest as a result of this work.

3. Involvement in the SFC project on Embedding Equality and Diversity in the Curriculum. This has involved working with the HEA, Scotland's Colleges and the Equality Practitioners Network.

In terms of running and organising this community, much needs doing. Many years ago, the community was run by a Convenor (who sat on the Universities Scotland parent committee) and a secretary who was, as it were Convenor in waiting. These days with so many SHEDs needing a coat of creosote or similar, there is a small bunch of people who run things behind the scene: we still have a convenor, and deputy, a secretary, a Skye organiser and someone to look after the blog site. Everybody does this for free, and there is never a shortage of a volunteer for a vacancy. Meetings rotate around the Scottish institutions and we all take our turn to provide a SHED for the meetings and refreshments and lunch are provided free by the host institution. There is no annual membership fee (unlike HEDG) – the community runs as a community for the community, something we are proud of!

### A kit for building your own SHED

Our experience in Scotland is, we think unique. A combination of goodwill, a strong nucleus and a common commitment to making the most of the resources that we do have at our disposal has meant that we have achieved a lot for a group of our size. If you read the QAA Enhancement Led Institutional Review reports on Scotland's Universities, many of them contain positive statements about the Ed Dev unit, e.g.:

*'The Centre for Academic & Professional Development has coordinated an extensive staff development programme over the past five years to support and promote the use of the VLE, and an e-learning users' group has been established to evaluate and disseminate good practice.'*

*In particular, the support provided by the Centre for Learning and Teaching for the Curriculum Reform Project has helped the University to innovate its approaches to learning and teaching, and the University is encouraged to continue enhancing staff development to support innovation in learning and teaching and curriculum reform.'* (QAA, 2012)

Thus it would seem that our efforts have been well received by both the Institution and the external reviewers!

'So what?' you might ask, and it's true, we don't have a monopoly on these things. However, through a combination of geography, a little momentum, a strategic desire to embed ourselves in both our own institutions and within the Scottish HE community as a whole, and as a group of developers who are keen to extend a welcome to anyone new in Scottish EdDev, we think we have created a real sense of community.

We are of course not complacent; we have been engaged in the discussion on ELIR 3, on the next enhancement theme, making cross-institutional bids to the HEA and of course, in continuous dialogue on sharing practice. We have spawned a 'sister' group, ScotELAs, who have their own wee shed. This is a group of people who work within institutions to provide academic advice and support to students. A previous convenor who was also line manager for a group of these folks gently nudged them to organise themselves and the rest, as they say, is history. They don't report anywhere, but meet regularly, have an annual one-day conference and share the organisation. The name has stuck as we couldn't think what GREENHOUSE might stand for. So

anyone up for a CONSERVATORY next?

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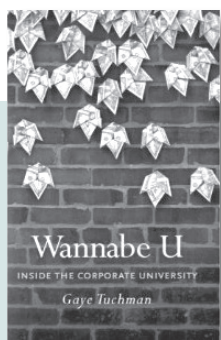
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# Book Review

## Wannabe U: inside the corporate university

Gaye Tuchman

University of Chicago Press (2009)



There are probably some people for whom this book would be an unwelcome addition to their shelves. Possible candidates include those who argue that the academy best functions through the expansion of elaborate administrative machinery, presided over by a chief executive and an inner cabal of decision-makers. At the other extreme, Tuchman's analysis of the rise of corporatism in the Higher Education sector might alarm anyone hoping that this tide can be reversed. British readers may be particularly interested in her view that (regrettably) British universities, responding to the requirements of bodies such as the QAA, are much more advanced than the US in techniques of audit and accountability.

This witty and incisive book combines the narrative sweep of the campus novel with the observational acuteness of Laurie Taylor's *Poppleton*. Tuchman, a professional sociologist, dissects the structures and behaviours of the pseudonymous Wannabe University in the US as it is driven through a process of transformation at the behest of its President. While the setting is American, the themes and behaviours Tuchman describes are global.

The opening chapter sets the tone. The President announces to an audience of selected university staff and local dignitaries attending a leaving party that WanU is 'in transformation'. While nobody present has the nerve to question why, let alone how, this might be necessary, we discover that the aim of the transformation is to move from being 'a respectable regional research university' to a Top 25

research university. Tuchman outlines the numerous tensions and conflicts which attempting to satisfy this aspiration surfaces: between administrators and academics, grant-winners and grant-losers, teachers and researchers, older and younger academics.

In subsequent chapters Tuchman unpicks the ways in which these conflicts play out, are (mis-)managed and the effects on all on campus. She notes the increasing gulf between those who set up a battery of metrics, measurables and deliverables in the name of accountability and academics whose responses range from 'ritual compliance' to outright subversion. She argues the irony that WanU, in striving to be distinctive and at the forefront of innovation, in fact exhibits the same kind of conformity as a WanU student who pierced her eyebrow explaining that this 'expressed her "individuality" because she had not pierced her nose...as had many of her contemporaries'. This is one example of Tuchman's sharply observed illustrations which spice her analysis. Other memorable asides include gauging someone's status by the quality of the buffet at their leaving party; a female member of staff celebrating her promotion by revamping her wardrobe to a more 'careerist' style *i.e.* suits; and a university homepage which manages not to refer, once, to education.

The appeal of this book lies both in its content and in its accessible and clear writing style. Its accurate aim is confirmed by an open letter by Professor David Dudley, reported in *Inside Higher Education* on 18 June 2012 (<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/06/18/senior-professors-mass-e-mail-leads-introspection>) and a call for open dialogue, not factional infighting, to realise the university's collective responsibility to their students.

Readers in search of a more passionate polemic may prefer Duke Maskell and Ian Robinson's 2002 book *The New Idea of a University*. But if your preference is for cool and humane insight, I'd recommend Gaye Tuchman every time.

**Fran Beaton** is the Programme Director for the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education in the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Kent.

## Assessing students at Masters Level: learning points for Educational Developers

Sally Brown with Tim Deignan, Phil Race and Janice Priestley

'Assimilate' was a three-year £200,000 National Teaching Fellowship project based at Leeds Metropolitan University designed to explore innovative assessment at Masters level, to offer the sector greater awareness of diverse practice in assessment at taught Masters level,

and to provide a catalyst for future development of assessment in this much under-researched area. Our rationale was based on the assumption that fit-for-purpose assessment will lead to enhanced student learning experiences, *i.e.* assessment for, not just of, learning.

### Students as researchers

When we started the project, we hoped to be innovative in both our project approach and our outcomes. We planned in the first instance to use second year Journalism students as researchers, having given them a briefing on assessment issues and

having provided them with UK contacts to follow up by phone or by email. The original idea was that those who were successful in completing UK interviews would be funded to go wherever they wanted to go on budget airlines (up to £250 per student) and to undertake interviews with contacts we would again help them find. What could possibly go wrong?

In the event, we underestimated how much briefing they would need and over-estimated their likely enthusiasm. Despite a significant amount of groundwork by the project team, very few of the students successfully completed UK interviews and the outcomes of these had to be worked on further to be usable. Some of the students were quite cynical, in effect accusing us of trying to use them as cheap labour, which was far from the truth. Some others were insufficiently robust in the face of setbacks ('He was a bit off-hand when I called him, so I didn't feel like calling him back.' 'It was as if he was doing me a favour by answering our questions'(!)), and we were very disappointed by the results.

Learning point for Educational Developers: *We found that using students as researchers was not straightforward. We were ambitious in hoping that a whole cohort would cheerfully undertake the task as part of an assignment and we would have done better selecting from volunteers. They also probably needed more and better preparation than we offered them.*

### The project team

To be eligible for an NTFS project you had to be an NTFS Fellowship holder; we had four involved in the bid, but two were semi-retired, and two of us were in very demanding jobs. As the lead bidder and project leader, I was hoping to shape and contribute to the project while holding down the role of PVC Assessment Learning and Teaching. We had an excellent and experienced project manager and later recruited a first-rate project officer. But when things got tough, it was hard for me to find much time to allocate to ensuring the success of the project. For a while it looked as if the ship would founder!

Learning point for Educational Developers: *Substantial projects need substantial input at all levels. To get the most from the project, the lead bidder should make sensible and realistic time allocation to the project and, while delegating as appropriate, be prepared to be substantially hands-on.*

### Turning the ship around

The end of the first year of the project required us to seriously review our position. However, this coincided with my decision to take early retirement and we also had a project officer who had some additional time available to commit to the project. We decided to do the interviews ourselves and to develop an international dimension to the project, serendipitously, during my visits to Australia, New Zealand, Spain, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands and Singapore. Our project officer completed the planned UK interviews and we started to amass a considerable body of useful material.

Learning point for Educational Developers: *The point at which a project seems most in trouble is just where creative solutions can usefully present themselves. We nearly terminated the project early, but by re-engineering the design (with permission from the HEA) and by re-purposing the focus, we actually ended up with what we believe is a better project than our original design.*

### Diverse Masters level assessment methods

Our professional experience and the relatively limited available literature in the field suggested prior to the start of the project that most assessment in current use relies principally on very traditional methods – particularly unseen time-constrained exams, essays, and above all, dissertations and other lengthy written assessments. We certainly found plenty of those. We also initially expected to find less richness and diversity of assessment compared with undergraduate level, but were nevertheless hoping to find examples of good practice to share. Both expectations have been confirmed.

Using various research mechanisms, we have assembled a good range of UK and

international case studies of Masters level assessment, among which are some very interesting examples of innovation. We have also collected some overviews, from different nations, of approaches to Masters level assessment. All of these can be found on our project website at <http://assimilate.teams.leedsmet.ac.uk/>.

Examples of innovative Masters level assessment include:

1. The production of an information pack for an Open University module on abnormal human development, suitable for parents whose child had been recently diagnosed with a disorder/syndrome/disease or a teacher who had been told they were to have a child in their class with the disorder/syndrome/disease. The quality of some of these packs was so high that they were sent to self-help groups and many were subsequently published because they were of a higher quality than those which were in current use.
2. A range of authentic assignments for a Masters programme in 'Genetic Counselling' at Griffith University, Queensland, which were designed expressly to ensure that those completing the course would be employable in the field on graduation. Students are assessed individually on their ability to unravel complex genetic problems by building genetic family histories and working on authentic case studies. Role plays, skills tests, short written responses to ethics issues and reflective journals, multiple choice tests and practical assignments are also used.
3. A requirement on the Masters in 'Applied Maths' at the University of Bath for students to write a dissertation on a project suggested by industry, where they are given a mark based on how well they have interacted with the industry and addressed the problem.
4. The use of asynchronous discussion boards on a Masters

- Level 'Immunology' course, where students are required to contribute meaningfully and then have to write a reflective piece on what they had learned, who helped them to learn it and how they had assured themselves the information was accurate.
5. Team translation projects on the 'Masters in Translation Studies' at the University of Leeds, which closely mirror real-world translation tasks, with students translating (localising) websites and software into up to ten languages simultaneously, under student project managers, using industry-standard software. They are assessed on their use of the tools and contribution to the project (meeting deadlines, efficiency, problem solving, sharing resources) as well as the quality of their translation work.
  6. Student-delivered seminars and workshops on the 'Masters in Water Resource Management' at the University of Gloucestershire, where students present to final year undergraduates on topics they have researched, including interviewing key individuals beforehand, adding further to the authenticity of the assessment task. They are then assessed on both the content and nature of engagement with the student group to whom they delivered.
  7. An intensive immersive study week for a module at Griffith University, Queensland, on a 'Social Sciences' Masters programme where students come together to work on interpersonal skills involving video-recorded role plays of counsellors and clients interacting, under the supervision of trained tutors.
  8. Student-designed learning products at Manchester Metropolitan University for a programme on 'Designing Online Learning for Librarians and Information Managers', where they are expected to apply and justify pedagogical principles as well as completing a reflective log. Examples include a personalised project for a child with Down's Syndrome, a project on doing bibliographic searches, another for teaching a language, and another from a personal trainer.
  9. Professional tasks and scenarios on the 'MA in English Language Teaching and Materials Development' at Leeds Metropolitan University, which aim to mirror real life by using presentations, articles written for various audiences, and the evaluation and adaptation of materials for specific purposes, all undertaken with rapid, audio-recorded face-to-face feedback, subsequently available on the Virtual Learning Environment for later review.
  10. Flexible, negotiated assignments at Massey University, New Zealand, for a Masters level programme on 'Tertiary Teaching', where almost all participants are employed in teaching at post-compulsory level. Students are free to submit material in a wide variety of forms to demonstrate the achievement of fifteen learning outcomes for the programme. Many assignments are based on students' current workplace environments. Outputs include creative writing, paintings and more conventional written assignments.
  11. Assessed group presentations of Marketing Communications plans and campaigns on a MSc 'Marketing Communications' course at the University of Bedfordshire, to discuss current issues in marketing communications, for example the impact of new media. This assessment approach has been introduced as a form of student-led peer teaching. Students also produce individual development portfolios which include industry-standard tests, promotional podcasts and personal reflections.
  12. Group assignments where students work in groups of 4-8, with live clients on authentic tasks, to increase their employability, at Cranfield University on the 'Manufacturing Masters' programmes. Outputs include project reports, posters, presentations, and other features such as Lego models of new factory layouts. Employer clients are involved in the assessment.
  13. Live assessed presentations at James Cook University, Queensland, on the 'Masters in Development Practice', which prepares them to work in sustainable development contexts. Assignments are designed to be useful to the communities with whom they are working. These presentations include systems models, risk assessments and development plans, based on the students' own on-site research.

Learning point for Educational Developers: *A variety of assessment methods and approaches is available to curriculum designers at Masters level, and it is possible to be creative and authentic without sacrificing quality and standards. But the exceptions we found in our research are relatively small in number compared with the approaches used on most Masters programmes, which are largely inflexible and tend to rely heavily on the written work, usually in large volumes. Our case studies showcase the work of many curriculum innovators who are determined to use assessment to enhance skills development and employability, both of which are highly sought after in the current climate.*

### **Making sense of our data**

Having amassed a substantial amount of data, including our interviews and project notes, we recognised that we needed a more structured approach to analysis than we had originally thought we would need, in the light of the significant refocusing of our project. As our use of students as researchers was no longer an innovative feature of our work, we decided to use a technique not commonly used in higher education pedagogy, Q methodology, which was familiar to me from work at an earlier stage of my professional

life from the social sciences context. Q methodology allows researchers to gain ‘insight into the immensely diverse (and often contested) ways in which people...make sense of the lifeworlds they inhabit’ (Stainton-Rogers, 2012, p. 152).

We recruited a researcher, Tim Deignan, who previously had undertaken some invaluable work for us in our Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching on Enterprise. Tim used a combination of Activity Theory and Q Methodology to help us to model our research participants’ practices and perspectives, which has proved extremely interesting. Activity theory (Engeström, 2000) highlights the complex interactions and relationships between individuals and communities as they use tools to achieve a common purpose. Using activity theory enabled us to refine our thinking about our data to identify the subject of the activity (the university), the tools in use (assessment methods), the rules that govern the activity (e.g. from the Quality Assurance Agency), the community involved (students,

lecturers, employers, etc.) and the division of labour (tutors and students, validation panels, external examiners and so on) as illustrated in the Figure below. The lightning bolts within the triangle indicate structural tensions which, once identified, can become points of learning and development for the system. The viewpoint bubbles were added to the original triangle following the Q study findings.

Our focus on activity was enhanced by a parallel focus on subjectivity (viewpoints), using Q methodology. A ‘Q-sort’ involves participants modelling their viewpoint on an issue by rank-ordering a set of items, usually statements, relating to the topic (Stainton-Rogers, 2012). Our items, all relating to assessment, were derived from the interviews and case studies, as well as other sources, and comprised 48 statements. The rankings of these items by the individual research participants were then subjected to correlational and factor analysis to interpret diverse and shared perspectives on the issue. Using statistical analysis of the Q-sort data

we interpreted five distinct factors, or viewpoints, relating to Masters level assessment (see Figure 1). Each viewpoint had a particular ‘take’ on the issues:

1. The innovative assessment and accreditation of learning for complex real life/workplace applications requires assessment training for both staff and students
2. Standards and consistency cannot be guaranteed by any means, but flexible assessment criteria and innovative assessment methods have their uses
3. Introducing innovative assessment methods can be powerful but requires new perspectives on learning with institutional support and encouragement for successful wholesale change
4. Clear guidance to students in the form of high-quality assessment criteria and timely tutor assessment feedback can help students to develop the skills that they and also employers want
5. Improving assessment methods does not necessarily require a paradigm shift in thinking,

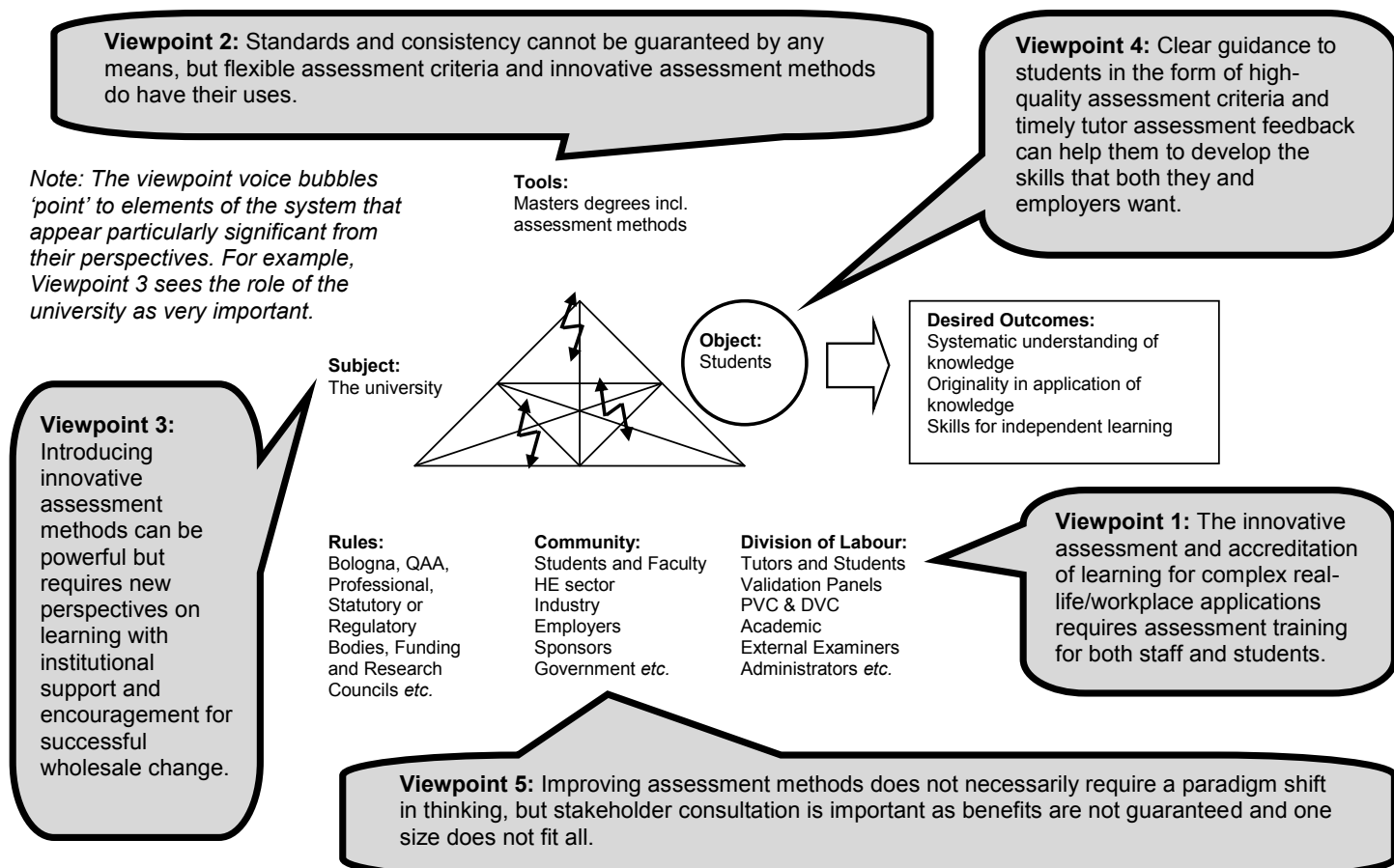


Figure 1 System Voices – five different viewpoints on Masters level assessment activity

but stakeholder consultation is important as benefits are not guaranteed and one size does not fit all.

Learning point for Educational Developers: *While our research was exploratory, and no claims are made regarding generalisability, nonetheless the interpreted viewpoints suggest that within a higher education community we may find different groups of people whose perspectives need to be considered. These include those:*

- *for whom training for effective assessment is crucial*
- *who believe that innovative assessment can contribute to quality assurance and enhancement*
- *who believe that change agents need high levels of institutional buy-in*
- *who focus particularly on dialogic relationships with students at the briefing stage and by giving feedback*
- *who have a strong commitment to consultation when bringing about educational change.*

### So where next and so what?

The process and outcomes of our research have been fascinating. We are disseminating our findings in the UK and internationally through conferences and publications. Our website currently includes our case studies and national overviews. It will also, as the project finishes towards the end of 2012, include full reports on the activity theory analysis and the Q study. We will also be publishing a compendium of resources in hard copy and on our website. Despite initial setbacks, we have met all major project milestones to date and to budget and we feel we are adding significantly to understandings of M-level assessment, particularly through our analysis of data to identify viewpoints. A further and often-overlooked benefit of the project has been that team members have themselves gained considerable professional development.

Overall Learning point for Educational Developers: *Undertaking substantial funded projects is a substantial task and one not to be underestimated in terms*

*of the time and resource commitment required. In the current climate, it is unlikely that such a large sum of money will be available for bidding for in the UK and perhaps elsewhere, at least in the short to medium term. However, we would certainly recommend seeking out opportunities to undertake such projects as they become available.*

Comments from the team on the benefits experienced include:

*'The project has given me an opportunity to work with well-published academics in the field of assessment, learning and teaching. It has undergone significant change in its time and has been transformed through the use of Activity Theory and Q-Methodology. I have become more comfortable with qualitative, rather than quantitative, data analysis and am interested in the potential to use Q-Method in future research.'* (Janice)

*'This was an energising and refreshing experience late in my career, which has proved more rewarding and interesting than even I as the bid leader envisaged.'* (Sally)

*'I was astonished to see how well the Q-sort process and the associated statistical analysis managed clearly to articulate*

*viewpoints, including my own, in recognisable ways.'* (Phil)

*'As a freelance consultant who often works alone, I learned a lot from working in a sustained way with very experienced colleagues in the sector.'* (Tim)

We also are reasonably confident that the outputs we have achieved both in terms of methodology and web and paper 'products' will be of benefit to the wider educational development community. Do visit our website at <http://assimilate.teams.leedsmet.ac.uk/> and let us know if this is true for you!

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# Using Student Conversations about Learning and Teaching to Surface Troublesome Knowledge about the HE Classroom

**Julie Hall** and **Jo Peat**, University of Roehampton

The widening participation (WP) policy agenda has raised questions about pedagogies in higher education (HE) and the ways they might be further developed to address issues of inclusion, participation and diversity. There have been calls for nuanced research that draws out the complexities of learner identities and pedagogical experiences (Burke and Jackson, 2007; Leathwood and Read, 2009). In addition bodies such as the National Union of Students (NUS, 2011) have called for more support for academic staff to review and develop inclusive practice.

The Higher Education Academy-funded NTFS research project 'Formations of Gender and Higher Education Pedagogies' (GaP) is just coming to an end at 'Riverside University'. Its main aim is to develop a detailed understanding of the relationship between social identities, and pedagogical practices and experiences. Another aim is to extend the focus of educational development to consider teaching and learning identities, relations, contexts and positions. An outcome of the project will be a set of CPD resources. At the SEDA May 2012 conference, participants from the project shared their experiences, particularly in relation to the ways in which student voices had provided a powerful context for dialogue amongst academic staff. It is the triggers for dialogue which will form the heart of the CPD resource pack.

Participatory methodology (Burke, 2009) is the heart of the GaP Project. This comprised, amongst other methods, 64 in-depth individual undergraduate student interviews across six programmes; 10 student focus groups; 15 focus groups with the academic staff who taught these students; workshops with invited students from a range of higher education institutions and a national workshop with academic staff. This methodology has given us very rich data on the University experience, from both staff and student perspectives. We have actively used the data to further generate discussion and reflection amongst staff about inclusive pedagogic practice and the extent to which they are able to respond to the range of identities in the HE classroom. These discussions resulted in deep reflection on practice, were highly appreciated by staff and led some teams to reconsider their practice. Underlying assumptions about student engagement were particularly troubled. Most importantly, this highlighted a disjuncture between the pedagogic intentions of staff and how the learning environment was experienced by the students they were teaching. For example, before hearing the student views, many staff described students as passive and disengaged, somehow different from students 'in the

past' who were more aware of what university required. Students, however, told us they were often bored and they were rarely invited to engage in a meaningful or safe way. The team are exploring ways in which these kinds of conversations can become an integral part of solving teaching problems reframed as an intellectually active process that moves people beyond fixed identities, official discourse and subjective notions of 'the academic role'. This conversational framework has echoes in Kandlbinder's (2007) term 'deliberation'. He describes it as demanding a form of communication that is different from everyday conversations. Mann (2005) describes deliberation in relation to online communities as 'opening up possibilities for expression, seeking understanding, making explicit norms and assumptions in order to question and configure them more appropriately, getting to know the other, checking out different experiences, needs and purposes, voicing different experiences, histories and positions and having these accounts heard'.

We suggest that the methodology became a powerful tool for reflection on practice and intellectual inquiry into practice for the following reasons:

1. The quotes encouraged some staff to confront their conceptions of teaching and the kind of learning approaches which were privileged or assumed alongside the tacit knowledge believed to be common amongst the team. Like Boaler and Greeno (2000) they came to consider the extent to which the learning environments they were creating were determining the development of students' identities as learners.
2. The quotes helped illuminate underlying feelings about agency (Fanghanel, 2007) and issues of power, room to manoeuvre, disciplinary traditions and surveillance.
3. Interestingly, some quotes seemed to provide what Meyer and Land (2003) have termed threshold concepts or troublesome knowledge in a more powerful way than other staff development strategies. A threshold concept can be seen as a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress. As a consequence of taking on a threshold concept there may thus be a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape, or even world view. Examples of transformed interpretations include those relating to:
  - silence in the seminar room
  - boredom during lectures
  - impenetrable/off-putting curricula.

4. Troublesome knowledge is explained as knowledge that is 'alien', or counter-intuitive or even intellectually absurd at face value. Examples of troublesome knowledge include that linked to:
- power, fear and space in the classroom
  - opportunities to engage in a meaningful way
  - the kinds of learner identities which are assumed, privileged or marginalised by particular pedagogic practices
  - academic identities (or that part which dominates) and the consequences of mis-reading each other
  - the extent to which students are encouraged to imagine the experiences of others, recall what they once believed and how ideas have changed, determine pace of learning, content, assessment.

### Sensitivities and ethical considerations

Colleagues from across the institution have trusted us with very personal reflections on aspects of their professional role and have discussed issues openly and without reservation. It is therefore incumbent on us to ensure that the data is not used in any way that could be undermining or threatening to them and that it is presented to other staff and to students in such a way as to remain meaningful, whilst respecting confidentiality and anonymity. This is challenging, in that some issues that have been raised are very context dependent and it might be easy to work out their source.

Equally, the students have raised many very interesting points, particularly for an educational development unit. In using the data as resource material and as a lever for change, we have to be aware that data was collected as part of a specific research project – making wider use problematic. At the same time, the students have been so open, hence it is incumbent on us to show them that we have listened to their views and acted on the information, closing the feedback loop and demonstrating impact. If we fail to do this, the message that is given is that candid participation in such projects does not result in change.

We are cognisant of the risk of data-mining both staff and students: colleagues and students have been extremely generous with their time and the information they have shared with us. It is important that they see the benefits of engaging with us in this way and do not feel that their views have been (mis)used by us to our own ends or, indeed, disregarded.

Another important sensitivity is the extent to which colleagues welcome student views on the efficacy and suitability of the pedagogic practices they have experienced. Whilst we acknowledge that students have significant and varied experiences of learning in different sectors and will doubtless have preferences with regards to the teaching style they most appreciate, many have come from educational regimes that are very different from those at university. While recognising the importance of the student voice, there is the question of whether raw experience is a valid measure of the quality of learning and teaching. This raises the issue of meeting expectations, clarifying and explaining practices and embracing flexibility and difference.

A final ethical issue we have been keen to keep in mind is that of imposing our interpretations on the analysis of the data. An example of this is the notion of 'students as consumers':

we are mindful that it may be us flagging this up to staff in interpreting the student views rather than this coming from the students themselves. Relatively few students have alluded overtly to the fact that they are funding their studies and are therefore repositioning themselves as customer or consumer, and yet this discourse does seem to permeate GaP focus groups with staff.

### Practicalities

Practically, the methodology we have chosen has created certain problems for us. Recruitment of the students initially seemed very straightforward: members of the GaP team explained the project to Year 2 students in teaching sessions and this engendered a significant level of interest. Establishing dates for interviews was, however, more difficult, especially as the term progressed and other, important aspects of university life were prioritised. Recruiting an equal number of male and female students made this even more difficult, as we found that we were turning down female students (who predominate at the case study institution) because of an under-recruitment of male students. Because of a shortfall in terms of numbers, we had to deviate from our initial six programmes and recruit students from our pool of student representatives. This was very effective, but means that we have an unrepresentative number of particularly engaged students involved in the project. When drawing conclusions from our findings, this needs to be borne in mind.

The staff groups were surprisingly easy to recruit: there was genuine interest amongst our colleagues in taking part in the project and, more surprisingly still, in being observed whilst teaching. Taking part in a research project about pedagogic practice repositioned teaching concerns and challenges as intellectual work (Hutchings, 2002). They very much valued having the space and time in which to talk about teaching and their experiences of working with the students and this has been a great bonus for the project.

Here are some of the student quotes which really seemed to provide the most powerful triggers for reflective dialogue. Colleagues in the SEDA workshop suggested that such quotes could be used in a number of ways, including as part of a dialogue sheet on the student experience or in a grid which staff use to rate 'how likely are students to say this about me?' Later in the year the GaP team will be launching a CPD pack with these and other quotes along with ideas for prompting discussion about inclusive practice.

*'I'm picking my modules specifically because of the lecturers. It makes a massive difference. I've already decided what I am taking next year. The teaching of the lecturer is more important often than what the content is because a good lecturer can make a dull subject interesting. A bad lecturer can make an interesting subject dull. So it's really important how they teach and whether you get on with them.'*

*'In the first year you were given so much help like borderline spoon-fed and in the second year they took it all away so you had no help, no support, nothing. You were just left to try and find...anyone you could find to*



help you were like “oh thank God”. The first year was like school and then to have it taken away when it really mattered, starting counting towards your degree was very hard. That was when I started thinking, “I don’t know what I am doing here anymore”.’

‘Some say they want discussion but they stand there “we are the lecturer” and if you critique something you get a steely-eyed stare and complete “no way” and it’s almost too frightening. We can’t really say anything we feel and so there is just silence. Do they know it’s easier to learn if you are arguing from your own point of view rather than being read out somebody else’s ideas?’

‘It’s done so much in schools, teachers are doing sessions that everyone can be involved in, and everyone can learn something. Yeah, it seems to be at university though they forget all of that. They should ask us!’

‘Sometimes the seminars are lecture seminars so it’s like they do a lecture and then split the group up but it’s like they don’t have much time. She was like blah blah blah de blah and she had so much in her presentation and so many points and she was just basically reading them at us very fast and then not saying just adding more stuff on and it just goes completely over your head and you don’t learn anything.’

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# How can we persuade students to embrace groupwork?

**Debbie McVitty**, National Union of Students

While undertaking the research for our recent report, *Never Too Late to Learn: Mature Students in Higher Education*, published jointly with million+ in May, we facilitated workshops around the UK with mature students and institutional staff. One thing we wanted to understand was which aspects of the higher education learning experience mature students found more or less positive.

One consistent message that the students at our workshops kept raising was the issue of groupwork. Groupwork, for some reason, was usually associated with a negative experience. The mature students we spoke with felt that groupwork tends to mean that they shoulder a

disproportionate part of the burden of whatever task the group has been set. In one case, a student claimed to have written a group presentation from scratch because the younger students had been slacking. In another, a mature student reported that her lecturer had expected her – unfairly in her view – to lead the group and be responsible for its outputs. While scenarios like these are hardly likely to be universal, the consistency of the message about groupwork is cause for concern.

Disliking groupwork is not confined to mature students – many students feel instinctively that reward should match individual effort, not the combined output of a group. Many students

who do not perceive themselves as representing the ‘norm’, perhaps not being of the dominant ethnicity, gender or educational experience of the rest of their course, may struggle to find their role in a group. But groupwork serves an important purpose in learning. It ought to be a means for students to contrast their understanding of a topic or issue with those of their peers and by doing so learn to see things from several perspectives. Through sharing and discussion with peers connections are made and understanding deepened. Group exercises are of particular value in considering the application of knowledge to real-world contexts. And, put frankly, in the real world most things are a group effort – including

academic achievement. Learning how to share learning with others is a valuable life lesson – and that includes learning how to handle freeloaders.

In reflecting on the higher education learning environment more generally, the mature students we spoke to described a level of hesitance in integrating with younger students. Fear of appearing less well educated – bearing in mind that many mature students had not had the most positive experience of education up to this point – or feeling that their age marked them as outside the mainstream, made these students feel that integration with the wider student body was, if not impossible, certainly complex. Viewed from this perspective, being assigned a group project and told to get on with it can present a specific set of challenges for mature students around negotiating their student identity in relation to other, younger, students. Nobody wants to be automatically assigned the role of substitute lecturer, or worse, the ‘mummy’ whose job it is to keep order among the rest of the group.

Lecturers are coping with the challenge of teaching an increasingly diverse student body. Many, no doubt, have evolved sophisticated strategies to help students become cognisant of the multitude of cultures and backgrounds that surround them and the implications for their learning experience. But in some cases it seems that in the haste to cover curriculum content lecturers can place too much faith in students’ prior knowledge or competency. Or indeed,

underestimate how plain difficult it can be to work with other people.

I wonder if there might be space for lecturers to take a more proactive approach in setting up groupwork so that all students might get the most from the experience. Particularly in the early stages of a higher education course, the idea of groupwork for the purpose of learning may be alien. Students may need support to see the value of groupwork in their learning context, and advice about how the group should work together to ensure everyone is able to participate effectively.

Some suggestions:

1. Ensure groupwork is introduced at an early stage of the course and that students are given the opportunity to discuss their expectations and concerns around groupwork. Likewise, track progress and ask them to reflect after the fact on what worked well and what did not. Do not make early groupwork exercises any part of formal assessment.
2. Encourage students who are working in groups to be mindful of group dynamics and the range of group roles available to them. Ask them to reflect on what groupwork means and its purpose in the context of their subject. Teachers could invest some time in explaining why they feel groupwork is the most valuable way for this part of the curriculum to be addressed, and what their expectations are of students’ performance.

3. Have a frank discussion about what is fair in structuring group assessment. This could be at module, course, faculty or institution level, depending on what is appropriate. Ask students to consider times in their lives when they will be judged on the performance of a group of which they are a member and what the implications are for how they approach groupwork in the academic context.

At the core of these recommendations is the idea that groupwork is a purposeful exercise: that when teachers choose to approach something via groupwork this is because a pedagogical decision has been made that groupwork is the most effective vehicle for learning in this context. There is also an expectation that students enter higher education in part to enable them to effect their purpose in the wider world – not necessarily to rack up a basket of ‘skills’ that can be ‘transferred’, but to deepen their understanding of what can be achieved when the mind is stretched to capacity. Groupwork is one of the many ways that students stretch their minds; let’s make sure they have the tools and confidence they need to embrace it.

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The million+ and NUS report on mature students in higher education *Never Too Late to Learn* is available at <http://tinyurl.com/c9p2k8a>.

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# International collaboration: Developing an international nursing module through the use of Wiki technology

**Sharon Metcalfe**, Western Carolina University, **Wendy McNally**, **Karen Strickland** and **Elizabeth Adamson**, Edinburgh Napier University, and **Hannele Tiittanen**, Lahti University of Applied Sciences, Finland

## Introduction

The internationalisation of education gathered momentum with the Bologna process initiated in 1998, which focused

upon lifelong learning, involvement of students into Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and easing mobility of students for job placements by 2010 (Davies, 2008). This goal for

globalisation continues to be unmet due to obstacles related to migration and language. Other barriers exist with cultural, social, and ethical factors. Educators are seeking creative virtual learning environments (VLEs) to augment the learning experience for all students to help meet these goals by 2020.

With the shrinking of the world economies and the technological revolutions of the past ten years, educators desire innovative methodologies to enhance students' international experiences. Traditionally, nursing students were encouraged to engage in overseas clinical placements to gain cultural and diverse experiences. Due to the increased costs of overseas travel, these types of culturally enriching experiences are waning. But with increased global migration, students must be prepared to become active world citizens in the care for their patients. Regardless of the student's background, educators want technologies to enable culturally authentic experiences that simulate the previous era. We sought to utilise Wiki technology to broaden the global learning experiences for students from three HEIs.

### Use of Wiki technology

Using online Wiki technology, students from three universities were virtually connected to experience international education through a pilot study which lasted for a 15-week trimester during the autumn of 2011. Shared and secure wikis were developed to create a VLE for interactive dialogue pertaining to mutual health and societal trends. There were three shared Wiki sites: one between Edinburgh Napier and Lahti University of Applied Sciences; another between Edinburgh Napier and Western Carolina University; and the third between Western Carolina University and Lahti University of Applied Sciences. Twenty-two students (both postgraduate and undergraduate) from the three countries enrolled in the pilot study. Each of the three Wiki sites had student and faculty members from the three universities.

### Collaborative planning

Logistical arrangements began with obtaining the administrative approval of each of the HEIs. The members of the educational team met with the individual heads of school to introduce the concept of this new module. Although this type of educational programme was quite revolutionary in scope and depth, the administration of the three HEIs was supportive and granted permission. Accreditation was granted from each of the universities for academic credit.

The planning for the shared Wiki module was conducted during the summer of 2011 with faculty from each of the HEIs. Extensive implementation meetings were conducted both face to face as well as online through Skype to discuss the parameters. The module was developed with the overarching framework of increasing international awareness. Student input and guidance for modular content was sought, encouraged, and provided to the faculty staff by the student president of the International Nursing Society at Edinburgh Napier University.

Asynchronised learning and use of the English language were a requirement. Despite different institutional platforms for learning, the Wiki 2.0 technology was utilised for

student enhancement as it offers an effective platform for facilitating cross-institutional and cross-cultural interactive learning (Ertmer *et al.*, 2011). A learning technologist from Edinburgh Napier developed the three private and secure Wiki websites. Each student and lecturer was provided with a private password to enter the Wiki sites. Before the module, lecturers and students were provided with an orientation of the teaching and learning process to the use of the Wiki platform. These orientation processes needed to be mandatory as students may have been familiar with such social media sites as Facebook, but were unsure of the methods for using Wikis for sharing information, posting links to important topical websites, and understanding the creation of new Wiki web pages. The freedom of using Wiki technology, which allows multiple users to continuously edit and add pertinent web links, podcasts, and YouTube video links was one of the prime reasons that the faculty decided to use this technological method (see Figure 1).

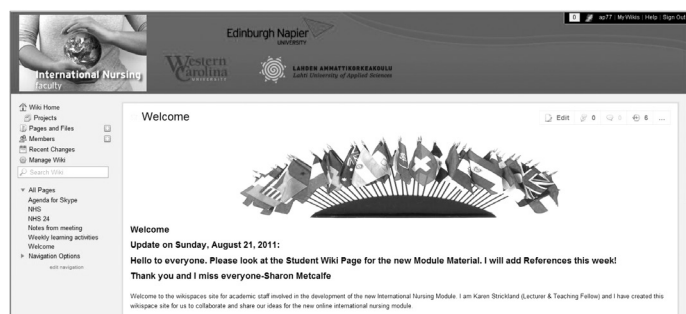


Figure 1 Faculty Wiki site used for staff development

### Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was sought from the lead institution (Edinburgh Napier University) in the summer of 2011 to conduct the collaborative programme as a pilot study with the use of Wiki technology. Formal approval was granted from the Faculty of Health, Life and Social Sciences Research and Knowledge Transfer Ethics and Governance Committee. Students were notified upon registration for the programme that the module was part of a pilot study and were invited to participate in the evaluation. The lecturers carefully developed a learning outcomes-focused questionnaire which had a simple 5-point Likert-style format for assessing student responses. The guidance for the questionnaire detailed for the students that by completing the questionnaire at the completion of the programme, they were providing explicit consent for partaking in the pilot study assessment. The questionnaire survey was developed to be analysed using the Ultimate Survey assessment online tool. Additionally, students were provided with a series of open-ended survey questions to determine the ease of use and their individual comfort with the learning provided using Wiki 2.0 technology. By completion of the open-ended survey questions, the students provided both implied and explicit permission to ensure ethical considerations for use of data information in assessing the outcomes of the international collaborative programme.

### Educational conceptual framework

The educational approach in this module was based on the communal constructivist theory for its potential to allow

students to collaboratively unite in teams to transform their learning through theory of knowledge, and experiences and practices of their own country on the Wiki (Leask and Younie, 2001). The '3E' framework developed by Smyth *et al.* (2011) provided the pedagogical framework which supports the notion of the learning experience being a transformative process which can empower students to have influence over the nature and direction of their own learning. The 'empower' category is thus congruent with communal constructivism. As each week progressed within the modular programme, the students became more involved and undertook ownership of crafting the topical content for sharing with one another. Through peer engagement with one another and with faculty staff, students were encouraged to become advocates of their own learning and to become accountable for the world around them, and through becoming an activist leader (Garner *et al.*, 2008). The faculty staff for each of the HEIs were pleased that the students as learners became increasingly more in control of the development of the weekly content and eagerly assisted one another in gaining an appreciation of different cultural beliefs and practices. Students became empowered in the facilitation of their own learning throughout the international collaborative modular programme.

### Description of the international module

Each university was responsible for maintaining its own technological virtual learning environment (VLE) such as Blackboard or Moodle. Additionally, the three universities maintained their own module home guidance page, where students were notified of announcements and criteria for student assessment. This also served as the main communication site for background resources, general module information and support from academic staff in their own university.

To initiate the international Wiki module, students were invited to choose which country and Wiki website they would like to participate in for the module with no more than eight students within a group. The students from different countries were then assigned roles either as leader (opener) of the discussion activity or summariser for each of the weeks. Every student undertook each of these roles once during the module. These assignments allowed the students to develop as leaders for the weekly discussions. All students were expected to contribute to each discussion and become an active participant while interacting and engaging with other learners from the other countries. The primary idea behind assigning such roles was to ensure every student had the opportunity to lead and summarise so that no particular student emerged as dominant in the discussions. The goal of the programme was to create a unified environment where sharing of information was the key aspect of learning through the Wiki technology.

Every two weeks during the eight-week collaboration period students were given a discussion topic on which to focus their collaborative learning. This provided a focus for learning

and helped to add structure to the learning process whilst maintaining a degree of flexibility and student choice around the specific health condition or area of nursing they focused on. From observations and discussions in providing academic supervision to the cohort, the faculty noticed that students found this aspect both liberating and challenging as previous learning experiences had perhaps been more defined, offering less scope for creativity. In essence the module provided a basic structure with some learning resources and a series of discussion-based activities allowing students to generate their own content.

All students engaged well in the discussions on the Wiki sites and showed real depth to their learning and understanding of international health care and issues of cultural competence. The use of the Wiki technology allowed the students to continuously add new and important information for the fortnightly topics and provided a supportive platform for exchanging content from resources around the world.

### Learning outcomes

The module provided the students with the opportunity to learn about contemporary issues in international nursing and health care systems. Throughout the module specific tasks were given for the students to learn about issues in partner countries. Therefore, to achieve the learning outcomes, the student was responsible for searching for, and answering queries relating to, nursing and the health care systems within their country. The ultimate outcome was for the students to compare and contrast the differences between their own country and the other country. The students were asked to successfully complete the following learning outcomes for the international collaborative module:

- Introduction week for student exchange
- Compare and contrast health and social care issues and trends in different countries
- Determine the relationship between health and social care trends and nursing roles
- Evaluate the implementation of international health and social policy by national governments
- Critically reflect on the contribution of nursing to international health and social care systems
- Provide examples of engagement with module content including active participation in online discussion activities and engagement in Wiki-based contributions.

### Module learning assessment

Each of the institutions assessed their students through a written essay assignment where students compared and contrasted the health care issues and nursing roles of their home country and the country they chose to collaborate with during the module. Additionally, the students had to provide examples of their individual online contributions via the Wiki platform. The lecturers supported the contributions of the discussions through minimal encouraging comments regarding the quality of their discussions. All 22 students sat and passed their assessment, which is a very positive outcome for both the students and the international module

teams. Accreditation for each individual module was provided by each of the students' HEI.

### Roles of the educators

In designing and developing the international collaboration, the lecturers sought to create a modular interactive programme which allowed the students a tremendous amount of freedom in the selection of fortnightly topics and content. All of the students were adult learners, and adult teaching methodologies embrace the concept of encouraging adult students to plan and implement their learning activities. With the mixture of both undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled within the programme, the faculty staff decided to encourage the learners to take ownership of the content and fortnightly discussions. The role of the lecturers became one of 'guiding by the side' rather than being a 'sage on the stage', as is evident in pedagogical education.

The lecturers were assigned throughout the programme to take ownership of a particular Wiki page and ensure that students were posting their discussions and material for that fortnightly period. The lecturers would welcome the students to the new week of learning, and the leader (student leader from country A) and summariser (student country B) would then take the roles of guiding the discussion for the fortnightly topic. The lecturers met regularly on Skype to discuss the progression of the programme and the students' individual progress in their evolving roles as leader and summariser.

### Evaluation and lessons learned

Students from the USA, Scotland and Finland matured in their leadership development as informed citizens of global societal issues. This was highlighted from the students' overall comments on the open-ended questionnaire survey. Students' comments reflect their satisfaction with the module process and the learning environment through the use of the Wiki technology. The following quotations capture the depth and authenticity of the students' actual degree of learning and experience:

*'Sharing and discussing the issues with our peers in the other countries provided us with a more realistic view than we would have had by just reading about these topics in relation to the other countries. We learned considerably more through the interactions with other nurses than we would have on our own.'*  
(Student comment 1)

*'Perhaps the most striking feature of the Wiki was to highlight the similarities between nursing in the UK and the US. Through direct communication with American nursing students, I now understand that the struggles, triumphs and challenges faced by student nurses in the UK are not unique, that nursing is something bigger than my hospital and bigger even than the NHS.'*  
(Student comment 2)

*'This expanded outlook has made me ambitious to make a difference not just in the lives of my patients, but in the structure and organisation of healthcare as a whole.'*  
(Student comment 3)

These comments and student evaluations will be utilised to plan for future development and planning of this international module with Wiki technology. Additionally, students were able to learn through web links and photography and were encouraged to post their picture with their submission to personalise their discussions. This use of social media created bonds despite geographical distance.

### Future planning

The vision for the future is to continue to work collaboratively with our existing international partners and also to engage with other possible international partners in replicating this modular programme. The lessons learned to date are that the use of the Wiki 2.0 platform has been highly successful in allowing students to learn regardless of chronological, geographical and spatial barriers.

From student and faculty assessment and evaluation this international collaborative programme demonstrates that future modules can encompass team-teaching methodologies where each lecturer is located around the globe. This international module has shown that students can receive academic accreditation for participation regardless of their own HEI regulations.

This pilot study poses the question on how educators can further exploit technology to encourage mutual learning to enhance the overall student experience at a global level. Further, the flexibility of the module demonstrated how curriculum obstacles could be overcome in different countries.

### Implications for staff development and educators

This international collaborative modular programme will continue to be developed and delivered and evaluated for students. We recommend educators and staff developers who wish to utilise and implement the information gleaned from this pilot study to use similar criteria to further evaluate their programmes. This will support the future development of the use of Wiki technology for broader applicability to all domains of education. The use of Wiki technology opens the doors for widening the educational experience for learners in all walks of life.

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# Eight lessons for educational developers about introducing technology into educational practices

**Joelle Adams**, Bath Spa University

## FASTECH

The JISC-funded FASTECH project is investigating the educational and practical effects of using digital tools in assessment and feedback processes. The research team is collecting data about staff digital literacy, students' learning and experiences, and practical implications.

We are working hard to embed technology that improves staff and students' experience of technology. However, as these lessons suggest, we're learning the need to proceed slowly and gently with staff and students alike. We shall be looking out for more lessons as the project proceeds.

If you have any questions or comments about the project, please visit our website at [www.fastech.ac.uk](http://www.fastech.ac.uk), or email [p.hyland@bathspa.ac.uk](mailto:p.hyland@bathspa.ac.uk).

## 1. Staff comfort levels and opinions about technology vary wildly

Some colleagues are not interested in digital technology. They are intimidated by it, ignorant about its applications, and/or fed up with pressure to adopt quickly-changing practices, tools and

theories. Meanwhile, residents of the blogosphere/Twitterverse can forget that not everyone is reading the latest copy of *Wired* on their iPad while they take a break from developing an online learning space. We should not make assumptions about our colleagues' familiarity or capabilities with any particular tool, or indeed about anyone's digital literacy or digital enthusiasm. We need to check before we try to engage.

## 2. Some staff concerns are valid (but these usually have a solution)

It is not always fear, laziness or ignorance that prevents academics from using digital tools in their practice. Sometimes, teachers have tried new pieces of technology, and have been disappointed, frustrated, or thwarted by any number of challenges, technical, organisational or human. In particular, concerns about health and safety and about inclusive practice need to be taken seriously, and potential issues and adjustments identified and addressed.

We should work carefully to fully understand reasons behind resistance. We then need to act with

sensitivity to help break down barriers and find workable solutions.

## 3. 'It's better for the students' isn't always a convincing argument for staff

Like us, our colleagues are under tremendous pressure in their many professional roles. Evidence may well show that a particular digital tool improves student learning and/or experience. But we must also consider the tool's implications for, for example, staff time and workload. If some subject teachers already find pedagogical research a drag, then the introduction of an extra layer of required technological know-how may not appeal.

We need to be sensitive to the pressures our colleagues are under. We need to make sure that digital tools are accurately seen as solutions to problems, not as further symptoms of micro-management and a dehumanising, corporate educational environment.

## 4. Training and support – on a personal level – are keys to success

One of the most effective ways to overcome resistance to the adoption

of potentially useful tools is to provide continuing, where possible, on-demand, training and 1:1 support. This may sound expensive. But it can be very cost effective; because it works, and it need not take long.

We should offer friendly, helpful advice about technological innovations. We should work on this with HR, IT and other relevant departments.

### 5. Students need help, too

Just as staff have a variety of reasons for resisting technological innovations, students can find the adoption of new digital tools and systems overwhelming.

We should be prepared to work with learning development teams to provide support for students who may not be digital natives or residents. Working with learning development teams also gives us insights into features of course design and teaching that both help and hinder successful student adoption of digital media and methods.

### 6. Engage students to help develop and implement your project

We should ensure that students receive the necessary help and support. But we shouldn't stop there.

We should get students involved in a substantial part of our development activity – not just as questionnaire-fillers, but as researchers, trainers, and consultants. Students can be key members of the development team. And they can be very successful change agents.

### 7. Institutional regulations can be a barrier to good practice – or a starting point for change

Institutional regulations aren't designed to stop us doing good things. But they sometimes have that effect, as written or as interpreted. Using some emotional intelligence and political savvy, we can use quality assurance and other regulations to work for,

or at least in tandem with, rather than against, positive educational change with technology. Students in positions of responsibility may also be able to help effect some top-down changes.

### 8. Students aren't always keen for technology

We sometimes assume that students want us to use the latest technology in our teaching and assessment. But students (reasonably enough) sometimes prefer the status quo to an ill-conceived or hasty implementation of new technological interventions.

We should check. We should study the relevant literature, run pilot interventions, and examine and use student feedback.

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## TeachMeets: Guerilla CPD

**Liz Bennett**, University of Huddersfield

Dubbed as 'Guerilla CPD', TeachMeets are a relative newcomer to the style, structure and principles of continuous professional development (CPD). They are radical in that their intention is to provide teachers with a forum for sharing their practices outside of the classroom without the structures of normal staff development. This article introduces TeachMeets and discusses how their principles and practices have been adapted for use in formal CPD.

### What are TeachMeets?

TeachMeets were developed by a small group of people including Ewan McIntosh, who is an educational consultant and founder of NoTosh, a company which promotes innovative classroom practices. TeachMeets originated in the schools sector; their adoption was originally focused on the needs of teachers in primary and secondary schools. Teachers from other education sectors (for instance FE and HE) are becoming interested in their use. TeachMeets have also been co-ordinated by Schools of Education to encourage trainee teachers to build up their professional networks and engagement in CPD activities.

TeachMeets usually last a couple of hours, often in the evening after school, and are focused around teachers sharing ideas with one another based on their classroom practices – the things that they've used and found effective in

their teaching. The event is structured around two different lengths of presentation: the 2-minute or 'nano' presentation or a 7-minute or 'micro' delivery.

Very few rules apply to TeachMeets but originally they did not allow sponsorship or any commercial activity. However, more recently this notion has mellowed and whilst the subject of heated debate in the TeachMeets community, some events are sponsored, perhaps through provision of refreshments in exchange for giving out promotional materials. That said, TeachMeets are 'low key' events in that they do not have a regular funding source. Just as likely is an event without sponsorship where participants make a small contribution for refreshments. For instance, Bolton TeachMeet recently charged £2 for a pie and pea supper. The notion is that teachers organise their own events, often on the school premises and publicise them themselves, through word of mouth and its electronic equivalents including the TeachMeets wiki page ([teachmeet.pbworks.com](http://teachmeet.pbworks.com)) and social media such as Twitter.

### Accusations of 'technocentricity'

The focus of TeachMeets on innovation has led to accusations of 'technocentricity' – the principle that the technology takes centre stage and participants are concerned with showing off their newest, whizziest gadget. However,

this is certainly not their intention and, as Ewan McIntosh says, if the technology takes over, then the TeachMeets idea has failed.

The overlap between technology and pedagogy is one that is frequently debated by academic developers and learning technologists. There is a familiar adage of 'prioritising the pedagogy over the technology'. However, a more nuanced way of understanding the adoption of technology in the classroom suggests that rather than technology and pedagogy being discrete forms of knowledge, instead there is overlap between the two. As Mira Vogel concluded in her literature report for the HEA on the role of Academic Developers, there is a need for technological skills and understanding and this need 'challenges the prevailing espoused theory that the technicalities should be subordinated to educational concerns' (Vogel, 2010, p. 14). Likewise Mishra and Koehler (2006) note that it is necessary for teachers to have new forms of knowledge when adopting technology in their teaching practices – that is the knowledge of how the technology interacts with the content and pedagogy. They argue that it is inappropriate to separate technological skills from the way that they impact on both the content knowledge (what is going to be taught) and the pedagogical knowledge (how it is going to be taught).

Mishra and Koehler (2006) have theorised the way that technology, pedagogy and content knowledge interact. Figure 1 illustrates intersections between these types of knowledge with the technological, pedagogical and content knowledge (PTCK) at the centre of the Venn diagram. Kennedy and Lefevre (2009) explain these intersections as new forms of expertise which require all three forms of distinct knowledge as well as an understanding of the way these three components interact with one another:

*'A teacher capable of negotiating these relationships represents a form of expertise different from, and greater than, the knowledge of a disciplinary expert (say a mathematician or a historian), a technology expert (a computer scientist) and a pedagogical expert (an experienced educator). Effective technology integration for pedagogy around specific subject matter requires developing sensitivity to the dynamic relationship between all three components.'* (Kennedy and Lefevre, 2009)

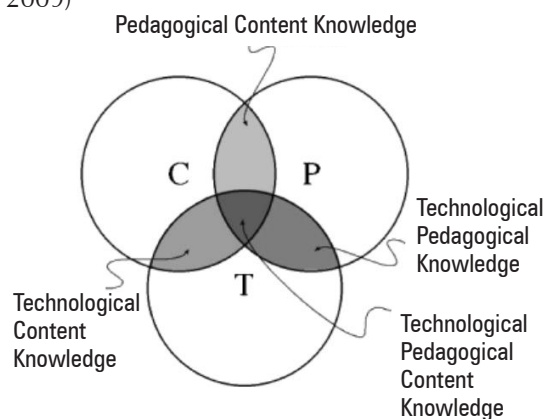


Figure 1 Pedagogical Technological Content Knowledge, PTCK. The three circles overlap to lead to four more kinds of interrelated knowledge. (Source: Mishra and Koehler, 2006, p. 1025).

The PTCK model suggests that to effectively integrate technology into one's teaching practices requires all three forms of knowledge as well as knowledge of how each interacts with the other. Teacher education has traditionally been concerned with developing pedagogic knowledge and pedagogic content knowledge. Hence a Post-Graduate Certificate in Higher Education Practice may focus on principles of teaching and learning, and participants are required to apply this to their own subject setting drawing on advice and guidance of mentors within their subject context and wider reading about the teaching of their subject. The use of technology is sometimes relegated to a session on using the VLE (virtual learning environment), or perhaps on interactive white boards. If this is the case then the technology is being taught as a discrete, separate form of knowledge – the technology knowledge and the connection between it and how the technology supports effective learning are likely to be missing.

The PTCK model proposes that there is a new type of knowledge needed in order to integrate technology into classroom practices – that is, the knowledge of the technology, the tools and how they work. TeachMeets provide examples of how new tools can be adopted and applied to support new approaches to teaching in classrooms, that is, they exemplify Technological Pedagogical Knowledge.

The other aspect of the Venn diagram is applying knowledge of technology and pedagogy to one's own subject area, represented by the intersection of all three circles – the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge. TeachMeets are open to teachers from all subject areas and there is much to be learned from exploring the contextual and subject-related aspects in any teaching situation. Good teachers committed to their CPD will be asking themselves 'what can I learn from this example? What is similar and different about my context and my subject?' Working across subject and sectoral boundaries is a topic that I return to later in this article.

### Exploring the notion of 'bottom up'

Whilst TeachMeets appear to be an interesting and imaginative way of doing CPD in which participants can take control over their direction and content of the event, they do require some sort of facilitation. There is still a role as the host to make people feel welcome: both veterans and regulars. The facilitators must also encourage participation, which is achieved through signing up to the event on the TeachMeets wiki site, and arrange the running order. More than this, Ewan McIntosh comments that the attitude of the people that lead the events is crucial and, in particular, facilitators need to value looking irreverently at what teachers do and to challenge existing ways of thinking. These attributes of facilitation and vision are likely to be critical to the success of this model and to enable it to grow and develop.

TeachMeets are part of a broader movement – the 'unconferencing movement' – which suggests that the value



of a conference is not the keynotes, or even the workshops, but the conversations that happen in the corridor or over coffee. It is the social capital that we build by participating rather than the fact of attending. The ‘unconferencing’ idea is derived from Harrison Owen’s (2008) idea of Open Space, which argues for a similar, fluid, emergent style of meeting where there is no planned agenda, and where issues discussed come from the interest of the participants rather than from someone with an organising role.

Open Space Technology requires very few advance elements. There must be a clear and compelling theme, an interested and committed group, time and a place, and a leader or facilitator. Detailed advance agenda, plans, and materials are not only not needed, they are usually counterproductive (Owen, 2008).

Open Space, like TeachMeets, recognises that there is a role for a ‘facilitator’ rather than a leader. Owen (2008) argues that leadership in the Open Space model must come from the group and that this presents challenges to those who like to control the learning environment. Instead, the facilitator is responsible for setting the time and place for the event and providing a theme. However, the emphasis is on the agenda emerging from the direction in which the participants take the discussion.

There are similarities too between the TeachMeets approach and the work of Dave Cormier (2008), who has proposed the notion of rhizomic learning, drawing from the notion of the rhizome plant, one that propagates through spreading horizontally. It is an organisation without a central locus of control and one where no individual can really impose their will upon proceedings. This notion is one that applies to this sort of ‘bottom up’ CPD activity. Given cuts in the funding to local authorities, it is one that is likely to be a model those in Government would approve.

Rhizomic learning is part of a radical trend away from ‘teacher-led’ forms of education to ones that are led by the students. There are many other variants of this approach including many which focus on the use of networks facilitated via the internet to achieve their learning connections. See for example George Siemens and Stephen Downes’ (2012) theory of Connectivism, and Cathy Davidson and Theo Goldberg’s participative learning (2009). Learning of this type enables people, independent of formal academic structures, to build their own learning network, to access learning materials online and to develop themselves, propelled by their own motivation. It is an idea that has currency: several keynote speakers at conferences I’ve attended recently made reference to this informal approach to learning. It is worth following Alex Couros from the University of Regina and his videos on YouTube. See also Professor Andrew Ravenscroft (2012), from the University of East London, discussing young people learning to play the guitar, likewise from YouTube videos; and Professor Stephen Heppell (2009), from the University of Bournemouth, talking about viral, peer to peer learning made possible through social media. It appears that ideas

of ‘bottom-up’ student-led approaches to learning are part of the zeitgeist of the current educational landscape.

## TeachMeets and accredited learning

I have applied the ideas from TeachMeets within an accredited programme. The MSc Multimedia and E-learning at the University of Huddersfield is a course for teachers from a variety of sectors (e.g. school, FE and HE). It is a blended programme with around six day schools, which take place on Saturdays in Huddersfield, with the remaining contact mediated electronically. The TeachMeets format is used at the day schools. Students are invited to sign up to talk for five minutes on how they are using teaching tools in their classrooms to solve real challenges that teaching their subject in their context throws up. The session lasts for around an hour of the day school and ideas for technology use in practice are swapped.

**GoAnimate:** <http://goanimate.com/> – to create animations to a script

**Prezi:** <http://prezi.com/> – web-based presentation software which zooms around as you run the presentation

**Line o it:** <http://en.linoit.com/> – a web tool which enables you to use sticky notes

**Jing:** <http://www.techsmith.com> – a free screen capture tool

**Answergarden:** <http://answergarden.ch/> – a way of collating feedback easily

**ActivExpression:** <http://tinyurl.com/6vhee99> – handheld classroom response system allowing for a variety of answers

**Hot potatoes:** <http://hotpot.uvic.ca/> – a tool for creating interactive web-based resources

**Twitter:** <http://twitter.com/> – the social networking tool

**Text Wall:** <http://www.textwall.co.uk/> – pupils can send in messages which can be displayed in various ways

**Triptico:** <http://www.triptico.co.uk/> – tools to use on interactive whiteboards

**Diigo:** <http://www.diigo.com/> – online repository for book-marking websites. Favourites only stored in one place – this allows you to access it from a cloud

*Box 1 Technological tools featured during the TeachMeet session on the University of Huddersfield’s MSc Multimedia and E-learning*

After the day school the students often add to their blog posts to summarise what they learnt and to link to resources and the tools that were demonstrated. The MSc Multimedia and E-learning course is in part about the transformations that are possible through technology and hence our sessions have focused on a range of technological tools: examples of the technical tools are given in Box 1. However, whilst the technology is clearly a critical component for the MSc, it is only part of the story. Much of the discussion is around how

it can be used to support more active forms of learning for students.

The students on the MSc come from a range of sectors (including primary, secondary, FE and HE). Their subjects are likewise diverse, including both vocational courses (e.g. brick laying) and academic (e.g. degree in fashion). From my experience this breadth is not a barrier to activities which are based on principles of students sharing their stories and experiences. Students can learn from the different challenges of a different setting, and how their colleagues seek to address these. The depth of the discussion increases through the critical engagement that comes about through these discussions.

I fear I may sound rather apologetic for the technological focus of the MSc Multimedia and E-learning TeachMeets, but perhaps it is worth celebrating the power and potential of the web for enabling new forms of learning and for supporting new participatory and collaborative tools. Indeed one might argue that not focusing on the possibilities of new tools and technologies risks leaving educators copying fourteenth-century, pre-Gutenberg models of educational practices in which monks copied down by rote the text being read to them! Instead we live in an era of connectivity, where access to apparently infinite resources is free and almost immediate. As Barry Wellman (2002) has argued, 'The developed world is in the midst of a paradigm shift both in the ways in which people and institutions are connected. It is a shift from being bound up in homogenous "little boxes" to surfing life through diffuse, variegated social networks'. Thus to not make use of the transformative potential of the web might be considered negligent for the twenty-first-century educator.

The tools listed in Box 1 are mostly fee- and web-based ones. They fall into the category known as Web 2.0 in that they are participatory and collaborative and through these features can support constructivist and social constructivist approaches to teaching and learning. Box 2 identifies some of the possibilities of Web 2.0 tools in Higher Education practice.

*'Web 2.0 is a set of internet services and practices that give a voice to individual users. Such services thereby encourage internet users to participate in various communities of knowledge building and knowledge sharing.'* (Crook, 2008, p. 8)

*'Web 2.0 technologies fit perfectly with a particular pedagogic approach – the constructivist approach – which holds that learning is most effective when active – by doing; undertaken in a community; and focused on the learner's interests.'* (Committee of Inquiry into the Changing Learner Experience, 2009, p. 36)

*'Web 2.0 technologies are attractive, allowing greater student independence and autonomy, greater collaboration, and increased pedagogic efficiency.'* (Franklin and van Harmelen, 2007, p.1)

Box 2 Possibilities of Web 2.0 tools identified in recent research reports

The potential of web-based tools to support independent and/or collaborative learning is only just coming into the awareness of many Higher Education educators. Armstrong and Franklin (2008, p.1) noted 'usage to date has been driven primarily by the particular interests of individual members of staff rather than institutional policies'. This finding was also echoed by the Committee of Enquiry into Changing Learning Experience (2009) and UCISA's (University and Colleges Information Systems Association) biannual survey of TEL practices in UK HEIs, which reported low levels of interactive use of technology (Browne et al., 2010, p. 26) (see Table 1).

	Discussion boards	Access to multimedia resources	PDP	Enquiry based learning	Collaborative working
100%	0%	1%	3%	1%	3%
99-75%	3%	8%	4%	14%	3%
74-50%	3%	13%	2%	58%	23%
49-25%	9%	37%	19%	4%	59%
24-1%	59%	30%	53%	22%	0%
0%	13%		7%		13%
Don't know/ not answered		6%	13%		

Table 1 Proportion of courses that use Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) tools for teaching and learning purposes in all HEIs in the UK (after Browne et al., 2010, pp.10-26)

### Conclusion

TeachMeets offer a structure to CPD activities which are informal and led by participants. They also offer possibilities for more formal CPD courses and provide a model for engaging in more student to student interactions. The principles of building community within formal CPD programmes are not new, but the TeachMeets structure offers one way that they can be organised effectively. To attend a TeachMeet visit the TeachMeets wiki page at teachmeet.pbworks.com, which contains information about events planned across the UK.

### Materials

Ewan McIntosh's web page: [www.notosh.com/2011/01/teachmeet/](http://www.notosh.com/2011/01/teachmeet/)

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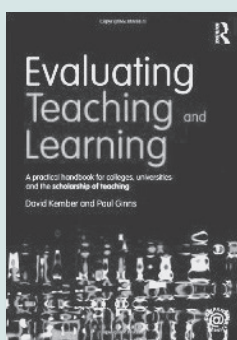
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## Book Review

### Evaluating teaching and learning: a practical handbook for colleges, universities and the scholarship of teaching

D. Kember and P. Ginns

2012,  
Abingdon:  
Routledge



Evaluating learning and teaching is a major concern for all of us. Evaluation questionnaires rain down on students like confetti, of which the National Student Survey has become the most important. More and more of us in Educational Development find ourselves asked to provide institutional research evidence regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of our learning and teaching practices.

If we only knew the answers, then so many of our problems would be solved! Unfortunately, like a great deal of social science, the best we can often provide is a definite maybe. The importance, over and over again, is context. What 'works' perfectly on Monday in seminar room A with Iteration 1, can be disappointing on Tuesday in seminar room B with Iteration 2, despite the best endeavours of the same member of

staff working to the same plan with apparently the same materials.

That is why a book like this one possibly promises more than it can deliver in its technical and scientific approach. *Evaluating Teaching and Learning* sets out to explain how 'to develop questionnaires and protocols that are valid, reliable and diagnostic'. The book gives an outline of evaluation principles and makes it clear that it is addressed to two distinct audiences: those responsible for conducting evaluation and those engaged in the conduct of research on their own learning and teaching situation. It helpfully sets out how differing types of readers might utilise the chapters. As a book to be referred to rather than read cover to cover, the index incorporating ideas, methods, theoretical positions and theorists is very useful.

The chapter divisions read somewhat like a conventional educational research methods textbook and as such are easily recognisable, including foci on questionnaire, qualitative and quantitative data. Where this book is more interesting is in the later chapters on using evaluation data for the scholarship of teaching and its recognition of the global aspects of higher education with the inclusion of an overview of international perspectives on teaching evaluation.

The penultimate chapter on the institutional use of teaching evaluation data demonstrates how data itself can be used as an embedded part

of university quality enhancement with an acknowledgement that for educational developers there needs to be co-ordination between the use of such data and academic staff development activities.

I found this book to be useful as a technical manual, although the spirit of educational development is somewhat lacking. It is full of practical examples while recognising the need for consultancy and advice when analysing results. It is a helpful textbook for planning learning and teaching research, working with colleagues or to support a research module of a PG Cert, although any challenges to power dynamics or the question of 'voice' are absent. It lends credibility to pedagogical research methodology that colleagues in the 'hard' disciplines sometimes see as fanciful creativity or wishful thinking, while also offering support for action research as a series of cycles of 'planning, action, observation and reflection' to bring about change and improvement.

As we identify the need for Educational Developers to become more analytically and technically expert in our use of the evaluation of teaching and learning when working with colleagues and managers, then this is a useful reference book for our armoury. What it is not, is inspirational about teaching and learning.

**Helen Gale** is Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching, at the University of Wolverhampton.

# SEDA News

SEDA's Executive Committee has approved the alignment of two of its Professional Development Framework awards for the initial professional development of teachers with the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF). For more information, see [http://seda.ac.uk/?p=3\\_1\\_7](http://seda.ac.uk/?p=3_1_7)

SEDA has been commissioned by the Higher Education Academy to conduct an evaluation of the impact of the UK Professional Standard Framework (UKPSF), reporting in March 2013. The project will evaluate awareness, understanding and use of the UKPSF at the institutional and individual level and will provide recommendations to the HEA on fostering the use of the UKPSF and future research in this area. For more information, see <http://seda.ac.uk/?p=15&n=26>

## Upcoming events

**17th Annual SEDA Conference: Excellence in Teaching: recognising, enhancing, evaluating and achieving impact**  
15-16 November 2012, Aston Business School, Birmingham

**SEDA Spring Teaching Learning and Assessment Conference 2013: Changing Values in Higher Education**  
17 May 2013, Marriott Hotel, Leeds  
Call for proposals now open

**One day Workshop: Education for Sustainable Development in Higher Education**  
11 October 2012, Woburn House, London

## Courses

**Supporting and Leading Educational Change (Professional Qualification Course)**  
29 October 2012 - 15 February 2013

**Online Introduction to Educational Change**  
5-30 November 2012 and 25 February - 22 March 2013  
See [www.seda.ac.uk](http://www.seda.ac.uk) to register for either of the courses

## New publication

**SEDA Special 32: Developing Community Engagement**  
by Kristine Mason O'Connor and Lindsey McEwen

## SEDA Fellowships

SEDA would like to congratulate all of the people below, who have been awarded a SEDA Fellowship during the course of the 2011-12 academic year.

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**Mark Stone SFSEDA**, Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning, University of Plymouth

## Fellowship

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