EDUCATIONAL
DEVELOPMENTS

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

SEDA
STAFF AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

Issue 13.4
December 2012 ISSN 1469-3267
£8.50 Cover price (UK only)

Contents

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

More information about SEDA's activities can be found on our website:
www.seda.ac.uk

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

Promoting research and scholarship amongst HE in FE lecturers

Dr Rebecca Turner, Plymouth University, and **Dr Angus Carpenter,** City College Norwich/HE Consultant

Educational developers work with a broad spectrum of individuals operating in a diverse range of educational settings. We have adapted to the changing context of our work, which is discussed with reference to the 'broadening out' of the academic workforce. Boud (1999) highlighted that the move of professional and vocational disciplines into HE would require further support to be afforded to lecturers to develop their expertise in both research and scholarship. However, to date, lecturers teaching HE programmes within further education (FE) colleges, have received limited attention from educational developers.

HE in FE – subject to multiple masters

HE in FE lecturers are subject to a multitude of guidance documents, policies and processes which shapes their pedagogy and practice. HEFCE (2003) advocated areas of good practice to support colleges in developing their HE provision; the Quality Assurance Agency subsequently produced review systems to monitor quality and guidance to support the introduction of degree-awarding powers. In addition, colleges and partner universities need to consider the implications of national policies, such as the recent white paper, as these can have significant consequences for college-based HE provision. Colleges are also subject to Ofsted's inspection framework for Initial Teacher Education, and expected to adhere to the training and quality assurance procedures of FE. For college-based HE lecturers, this has led to the recognition of the dual role many of them perform (Turner *et al.,* 2009): although they are teaching HE courses on behalf of a validating university, they are employed by the FE colleges.

Therefore, they are expected to negotiate the demands of two diverse sectors. Whilst this has been recognised as a challenging position to occupy, it has also presented them with a number of opportunities to explore alternative pedagogies, and engage with research and scholarship, practices not traditionally associated with FE (Turner *et al.,* 2009). This reflects the crucial role HE in FE lecturers are potentially playing in developing a college's HE ethos (HEFCE, 2003).

Enter the Higher Education Academy (HEA)

The HEA, through its HE in FE Enhancement programme, have sought to provide lecturers and managers in colleges with support to develop their HE provision. They have achieved this through a number of forums. The Academy's remit for

EDUCATIONAL
DEVELOPMENTS
The Magazine of SEDA

Issue 13.4
2012

2012 (Vol.13)
Annual Subscription Rates

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

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

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

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

supporting a varied HE community, including FE colleges, involves them inviting a wide network of educational developers, college managers and consultants to assist their work. In particular, the HEA were aware of the desire for many college lecturers to engage with research and scholarship – an activity that, due to the organisational constructs and funding structures of FE, has previously received limited attention.

Local expertise

In response to HEFCE (2003) Plymouth University placed the promotion of research and scholarship as central to the support given to lecturing and support staff working across their large partner college network. As part of this remit, Rebecca was responsible for managing a scheme to promote pedagogic research and implemented a programme of educational development activities to introduce college lecturers to the knowledge and practices associated with research and publication. The Research Centre at City College Norwich has successfully obtained about £250k of external funding from a number of research and government organisations and built up a track record of successfully completing and disseminating projects. In running the Research Centre, Angus has to manage both the varied external commitments and projects whilst also developing internal staff development opportunities. Given our rather unique and also shared experiences in supporting and promoting research in FE colleges, we were invited by the HEA to organise three one-day national workshops. They were aimed at college lecturers, support staff and managers, to provide an overview of the practice of engaging with research for lecturers and support staff, and for managers to gain an insight into managing research that may take place within their college.

Designing the workshops

Although a number of resources and workshops were available to lecturers to promote engagement with research, anecdotal evidence indicated they perceived that they did not recognise that the conditions they faced were a major factor in limiting their engagement with research. For example, college lecturers documented the limited resources (remission and financial support), lack of recognition, physical research space and culture as preventing their engagement with research (Anderson *et al.,* 2002). Whilst we were aware that university lecturers can face many similar pressures (Nicholls, 2005), they tend to have some familiarity with the processes and practices of research, providing a foundation on which to build. And if not, they can access the support of more experienced colleagues who often act as mentors. In many cases college lecturers are coming to research later in their careers, often lacking the knowledge and confidence to take advantage of what was available (Anderson *et al.,* 2002).

This position also connects with the practice of educational development which recognises the importance of context – ensuring activities are respectful and tailored toward the audience. These were key considerations in designing these workshops – to ensure that participants were introduced to relevant examples and grounded practices that could be taken back to their own settings. We also decided – where possible – to hold the workshops in colleges to better facilitate reaching the target audience. Also we began the workshops with an introduction to the drivers both college-based and external (e.g. national policy) that had led to the day to demonstrate how the workshops were directly related to their professional settings.

Who came along?

Since 2009, we have run 11 workshops, and whilst their content and format has evolved, the core aims remained the same. These aims clearly resonated with the sector, as 312 individuals attended the workshops, from FE colleges, universities and agencies (e.g. LLUK, JISC) supporting HE in FE (see Table 1). In particular, the content and focus of these events resonated with those based in partnership support units. These events gave these people the information and overview that they, as a university, could provide to their partners.

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
No. of participants	102	128	82
FE college	79	114	63
HE institution	13	4	19
Other organisations	10	10	0

Table 1 Event attendees and their originating organisations

Whilst it would be legitimate to question the longer-term impact of a one-day workshop, two thorough evaluations have been undertaken, the first tracking the impact on participants who attended the first seven workshops. Drawing on the findings from this first evaluation, we reflect on the impact of the workshops and highlight future areas educational developers should address in order to further support HE in FE.

The importance of guest speakers

The workshops were designed to integrate contributions from organisations which had a remit for working with HE in FE (e.g. QAA/JISC), and also, importantly, speakers from colleges with relevant experiences to share. For the participants, this ensured they had the opportunity to question those who had achieved what to many seemed highly unlikely – obtaining research money, conducting and completing projects, reporting on their impacts/benefits and disseminating to external audiences. This turned out to be a recognised strength of the workshops. This generated interest and motivated participants, whilst also showing them what was possible. This both enthused and raised aspirations whilst also informing institutional and individual participants' research and scholarship plans:

> *'It was good to hear personal accounts from two of the guest speakers this was very inspirational.'*

> *'[Speaker name] demonstrated how practitioners in FE can engage in research with the help of external bodies and funding in spite of the lack of support from her FE institution. As a lecturer also working in [names subject] I could relate to the subject and the difficulties of teaching a vocational [names subject] programme.'*

As with any workshop, the emphasis was very much on participation with a series of case studies and discussion activities (Kelly, 2003). Although content was revised following feedback, the workshops addressed the following areas:

- designing, implementing and disseminating research projects
- applying for funding
- informing institutional practice
- connections with teaching.

In particular, college lecturers found discussions on definitions regarding scholarly activity and research, and similarly the managers through their consideration of how to build a research ethos, as encouraging them to address key issues that underpinned wider discussions relating to the promotion of research and scholarship in FE colleges.

> *'The discussions around scholarly activity – for me really broadened out the purposes of scholarly activity and made me think how it may work best in our setting – maybe "blue skies" is best left to the Red Bricks and matters pertaining to practice, student access and experience and collaborative work with other colleges in our partnership maybe more fruitful for us.'*

Defining and recognising scholarship

The feedback from the participants echoes the discussions taking place across the sector regarding research and scholarship, and how they relate to HE in FE. Although HEFCE (2003) identified these activities as central to the emergence of an HE ethos they connected research and scholarship with staff development. It quickly became bound up with the discourse of CPD, a move followed by the Institute for Learning and Learning and Skills Improvement Service. Each of these organisations has their own position and expectations for research, scholarship and CPD, which complicate the picture for the HE in FE lecturer (e.g. IfL, 2010). Equally, in HEFCE's connecting research and scholarship with staff development it meant the contribution it could be perceived as making to colleges was perhaps narrower than anticipated. Indeed this position was reinforced by writers such as King and Widdowson (2009, p. 28) who spoke of the remit for colleges being to 'meet the immediate higher skill needs of local employers and to widen student participation in HE by offering appropriate vocational courses'. Therefore, they viewed it more appropriate for many college lecturers to be engaged with professional updating and maintaining their professional currency than to be necessarily engaged with research. However, what emerged from the workshops was that participants felt that there was a considerable level of research and scholarship present in colleges. The constraints resulting from existing perceptions meant that research and scholarly activity had not been afforded appropriate recognition:

> *'More going on in HE in FE than I was aware of – we need to do more to foster links/encouraging collaborative projects between HE in FE institutions.'*

> *'We need to do it and acknowledge the range and variety of research and scholarly potential within FE lecturers.'*

They perceived research, and opportunities to engage with research, as central to their emerging sense of professionalism as lecturers exposed to HE delivery. It was an aspect of their practice they were keen to develop, central to their credibility, and also integral to their students' progression through their degree programmes.

In support of this, participants were introduced to the ideas of Boyer (1990) and his framework of the scholarships of discovery, integration, application and teaching, using these to reflect on the breadth of activities they engaged with as professionals. We built on this by discussing (Trigwell and Shale, 2004) the development of Boyer's ideas which frames scholarship as an activity underpinned by the idea of incorporating working partnerships with students. Given

that many HE in FE lecturers value the teaching aspect of their role, and consider their practice as student-centred (Child, 2009), we viewed this model as being relevant to the research the participants would have the opportunity to develop. Tackling this issue was refreshing, giving participants a reference point upon which to build, and it encouraged them to recognise and value more widely the research and scholarship they were engaging with:

> *'…hopefully the systems we put in place and the research we conduct will help fellow staff, the wider field/community and the students.'*

> *'Students can only benefit from a more engaged approach. I was particularly interested in the examples of student-centred projects and collaborative work.'*

Embracing and managing research and scholarly activity

With college managers we focused explicitly on the contribution research and scholarly activity could make to the operation and management of colleges. Working with representatives from the QAA, we used the opening session 'building a research ethos', to challenge participants to align institutional strategies and national policies (e.g. FDAP/HE strategies) with plans for research and scholarship. Later these themes were revisited in a session in which college managers with experience of managing or supporting research in their college considered the lessons learned and the wider impacts on their institutions. These speakers highlighted individual benefits, such as increased self-esteem, confidence and enhanced knowledge gained from engaging with research, and also considered wider benefits to the student experience, improved programme offer and/or delivery. Following this session participants were able to draw parallels and articulate where similar benefits, and the need to communicate these benefits, fitted with their own institutional context:

> *'The need to involve the Governing Board, to gain buy in and also senior executive management to understand impact on student learning.'*

> *'As a practitioner wanting to make progress, it is also important to understand and discuss the institutional framework and approach to research and scholarly activity in an FE environment.'*

> *'[Name of presenter] session on the benefits, based on retention/success rates at [their] college – this provided a viable argument to take back to, often dubious, management!'*

Longer term impact

Through our evaluation we have been able to follow up previous attendees to examine how they have built on the ideas, practices and connections introduced at the workshops. Clear impacts were identified by respondents which were summarised into the following five categories:

1. Informing college policy, planning or practice
2. Confirming or reaffirming support and confidence to the individual
3. Providing clarity, with examples, on the scholarly activity definition debate
4. Providing information on what the HEA does and its funding
5. Highlighting institutional gaps with regard to its support and/or planning for research and scholarship.

Depending on the respondents' position, *i.e.* whether or not they were in a position to instigate change, examples were provided of the impact(s) following attendance at the workshops. The lecturers tended to identify how their own ambitions for research and scholarship had been shaped following the workshops with many articulating future plans for applying for funding, developing research networks/collaborations or disseminating the results of past work. Interestingly, they all talked about how they had sought to share their experiences from the day with their immediate colleagues. Not surprisingly college managers were more strategic in their responses; they tended to centre on the need to revise support and recognition for research, and also more widely value the contribution it could make to the processes such as quality assurance/FDAP. Given our original brief from the HEA, identifying the breadth and depth of impacts over a considerable timescale was reassuring, demonstrating not only the increasing significance of research and scholarship within HE in FE, but also the central role of educational developers in promoting this to the sector.

Concluding comments

We were not in a position to remove the constraining factors, e.g. time and resource availability, that limited participants' engagement. Rather we exposed attendees to the practices, networks and people they should be talking to – providing a foundation from which to build on, regardless of their position. For many this was an important starting point that they could return to in discussions with their colleges and with their university partners.

A significant and pertinent theme related to the sense of recognition participants gained through the workshops regarding the volume and quality of research and scholarship taking place within colleges. There was a sense that participants' research activities were rarely discussed or shared within their own institutions, let alone more widely through conferences and publications. This relates partly to an underlying lack of confidence amongst HE in FE lecturers regarding what they have to contribute, and a lack of awareness regarding modes of dissemination (Anderson *et al.*, 2002; Turner *et al.*, 2009). Although these areas were addressed in the workshops, it did demonstrate the need for further sector-specific events and resources to be developed to continue the momentum that had emerged from these workshops.

Following on from this the participants were keen for a forum to emerge that provided a platform for networking, regionally/nationally. This is where organisations such as

SEDA have the potential to act, as they can serve as a conduit for information-sharing and networking due to their established position and commitment to promoting staff and educational development to the HE community as a whole.

Resources

The content of these workshops can be accessed via: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/heinfe/he-fe-resources. In addition, a series of resources to support the management, analysis and presentation of research data, drawing on relevant examples from research conducted in HE in FE settings, can be found on these pages.

References

Anderson, G., Wahlberg, M. and Barton, S. (2002) 'Reflections and experiences of further education research in practice', *Journal of Vocational Education and Training,* 55, pp. 499-516.

Boud, D. (1999) 'Situating academic development in professional work: using peer learning', *International Journal for Academic Development,* 4, pp. 3-10.

Boyer, E. L. (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered: priorities of the professoriate,* New Jersey: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Child, S. (2009) 'Differing relationships to research in higher and further education in the UK: a reflective account from a practitioner perspective', *Research in Post-Compulsory Education,* 14, pp. 333-343.

HEFCE (2003) *Supporting Higher Education in Further Education Colleges: a guide for tutors and lecturers,* Bristol: HEFCE.

IfL (2010) 'Your continuing professional development' (www.ifl.ac.uk).

Kelly, D. (2003) 'Planning and running events', in D. Baume and P. Kahn (eds.), *A Guide to Staff and Educational Development,* Routledge.

King, M. and Widdowson, J. (2009) 'Scholarly activity undertaken in HE in FE', *ESCalate News,* 14, pp. 28-30.

Nicholls, G. (2005) 'New lecturers' constructions of learning, teaching and research' *Studies in Higher Education,* 30, no.5, pp.611-25.

Trigwell, K. and Shale, S. (2004) 'Student learning and the scholarship of university teaching', *Studies in Higher Education,* 29, pp. 523-536.

Turner, R., McKenzie, L. and Stone, M. (2009) '"Square peg – round hole": the emerging professional identities of HE in FE lecturers working in a partner college network in south-west England', *Research in Post-Compulsory Education,* 14, pp. 355-368.

Dr Rebecca Turner is an Educational Developer at Plymouth University (rebecca.turner@plymouth.ac.uk) and **Dr Angus Carpenter** is Research Centre Manager, City College Norwich and an HE Consultant (carpenter.angus@gmail.com).

Academic Research and Educational Development: Not Quite, But Almost, a Dialogue of the Deaf?

Tim Hall, University of Gloucestershire

The SEDA-supported project that this article discusses emerged out of personal reflections upon roughly 20 years as an academic geographer. These reflections focused primarily upon my research trajectory and its failure to match a supposed ideal characterised by linear progression and progressive specialisation (saying more and more about less and less).

Rather, my own research trajectory, and those of many immediate and more distant disciplinary colleagues, have been characterised more by discontinuity, change and diversity than any sense of linearity. I was interested in a number of aspects of this process of research change and diversity, its extent within my discipline and its impacts. Specifically, I wanted to find out what factors prompted academics to change their areas of research, often radically, as had been the case in my own research. Secondly, what roles, if any, educational developers had played in these changes and in disciplinary research development more generally. And thirdly, how these changes in research had fed into academics' teaching practices. To explore these issues in more detail I conducted an online survey with British academic human geographers who had changed or diversified their research (137 responses), a national survey with educational developers through the SEDA mailing list (41 responses), and held a number of discussions with both academics and educational developers which picked up findings from the surveys.

Research Change and Diversity

The idea that research trajectories represent smooth arcs of progress and specialisation appears, in the light of the findings of this research, to be something of a myth. Research change and diversity is a characteristic of a significant minority at least of British human geographers. Almost one-fifth of all human geographers in the UK responded to the initial online survey as part of this research and all of these identified change and diversity as characteristics of their research practice. For the majority this involved a major reorientation of research, although frequently there was a conceptual link between the different areas of their research even where the empirical linkages were few or non-existent. The research careers of these respondents resembled more the portfolio careers we associate with the post-industrial economy than with earlier stereotypical images of the academic researcher.

The research changes reported in the survey were motivated by complex interactions of personal, disciplinary and institutional factors. Of these,

personal factors such as curiosity or interest were the most common motivations, cited by 101, or 73.7 per cent of respondents, whilst disciplinary reasons such as spotting a gap in knowledge or something that human geography had said little about, were cited by 80, or 58.4 per cent of respondents.

It was very common for respondents to cite combinations of the personal and disciplinary underpinning their choice to change or diversify their research practice. For example:

> *'A combination of personal curiosity (I kept thinking about something and thought it interesting) combined with realising that there was little current human geography and contemporary sociology that addressed or considered what I thought to be pressing political and disciplinary questions.'* (Respondent 82)

Whilst institutional reasons are less significant than personal and disciplinary ones in statistical terms they were nonetheless cited by over a third of respondents (52, or 38 per cent). The most common of these was the need to secure funding whilst for others their change in research practices reflected the need to align more closely with departmental or institutional research priorities as reflected in research centres or units. Therefore, whilst we can argue that institutional reasons are less significant than personal and disciplinary motivations in aggregate terms, it would appear that for many respondents the pursuit of personal interests and disciplinary imperatives is dependent, to some extent at least, on their alignment with institutional research imperatives and priorities.

Research Change and Teaching

The relationship between research change and teaching practice was a slightly curious but largely positive one. Very few respondents cited links to teaching as a reason that prompted or underpinned their research change. Where a small number did talk of this it tended to be in what are regarded as some of the less applied sub-disciplines of human geography, principally cultural and historical geography (Demeritt, 2000), where it appears it is more difficult to secure permanent employment, win research funding and publish research articles. Here some respondents saw a move into other teaching areas, where there was a greater demand within their departments, as a possible way of securing permanent employment or at least greater security within the academic labour market.

Impact of research change on:	Very positive	Positive	Neither positive nor negative	Negative	Very negative
Your teaching	27.2% (37)	39.0% (53)	32.4% (44)	1.5% (2)	0.0% (0)

Table 1 Impacts of research change on teaching (from survey of human geography academics)

At times these shifts in teaching were accompanied by associated changes in research specialisms. Here teaching seemed to play an important bridging role between old and new research areas, allowing academics the opportunity to become familiar with a new area prior to extending their practice from teaching to research within it. In addition, the majority of respondents felt that their research changes had had positive impacts on teaching whilst around a third were more ambivalent and only two felt that research change had impacted negatively on teaching (see Table 1).

These positive impacts included the expansion of teaching opportunities opened up by research change and diversification and the enthusiastic responses of students to new material. One respondent said, for example:

> *'Students love to talk about this stuff and have been gravitating to it for dissertations and papers; the department doesn't really care as long as stuff is in the top line journals or a book and [I] am getting a few citations to the work.'* (Respondent 115)

Educational Developers and Disciplinary Research Practice

It is rare for academic researchers in human geography to consider educational developers when they talk about research change, but a significant number of educational developers have been involved in working with researchers or see it as an important part of their job. Within the online survey of educational developers, 23 (or 56.1 per cent) indicated that helping academics develop or improve their research was part of their job. In addition 38 (or 90.5 per cent) indicated that they had worked at some time with academics on issues related to their research and many felt they had important roles to play in enhancing the benefits of the teaching-research nexus. These were significantly higher figures than were suggested by responses from academics when discussing their research in general and research change specifically. Clearly, in these cases the two responses are not particularly closely aligned, although the two surveys were aimed at two different constituencies (academics within a particular discipline and institutional educational developers), so perhaps not too much should be read into this lack of alignment.

A significant proportion of the work of educational developers, where it concerns research, involves either pedagogic research or research management skills (such as supervision of research students). This might lie at the root of the lack of alignment between the two survey responses as very few of the respondents to the survey of human geographers identified their areas of research (either original or new areas) as pedagogic research. However, there are many instances where educational developers' support for research touches on wider aspects of the research process such as writing for publication and refining/improving research bids.

Responses included:

> *'As Research Co-ordinator in a small institution, working directly with academic staff has included: providing support for bids for external funding (particularly costing bids); proof-reading journal articles prior to submission; discussing research opportunities and priorities with individuals; providing staff development sessions on publishing in peer-reviewed journals, research ethics, and applying for research funding; advising on the institution's research ethics policy (in relation to both staff and student research); organising research seminars and informal research discussion sessions; discussing higher degree study with staff from professional backgrounds; advising on accessing staff development funding for research-related activities. My role covers all subject areas within the institution. This has included Sociology, Philosophy, Theology, Community and Youth Work, Outdoor Adventure, Speech and Language Therapy, Sports Science, Sports Development, Education, English Literature, Leisure.'*
> (Respondent 32)

> *'Support and coordination of pedagogic research with academics from all disciplines. Research design, methods, publication, funding, REF mentoring, Research-informed teaching. Also teach about research management for all areas of research (includes developing research career, ethics, etc.).'*
> (Respondent 36)

> *'As part of my consultations/ conversations I have discussed with academic staff how they might develop their work for publication, encouraged staff members to consider research activities (particularly with relation to their teaching), and explored research avenues academic staff are interested in to help them plan and develop. Subject areas are from across my institution's provision.'* (Respondent 37)

> *'I work with staff in all disciplines. A reasonable portion of my work is helping academic staff to develop their research management skills and those important abilities required for success in academia. These areas include academic leadership, supervisory skills and approaches, understanding the Impact and KE agendas, effecting Impact, developing KE strategies, securing grant funding, getting published and developing approaches to public engagement. Within this work I lead a PGCAP module on Career Development for academic staff.'*
> (Respondent 42)

The survey revealed, however, that the involvement of educational developers in the development of research practice is far from universal. Where educational developers have not been involved in research they cited a range of factors including: the barriers of discipline specificity; support coming from within departments rather than centrally within institutions; and some instances of staff being discouraged by their departmental managers from undertaking pedagogic research even where they are keen to do so. For example:

> *'I took this to mean subject-based research. They get support on that (if any) within their department. Throughout most of my career staff have been actively discouraged from undertaking serious educational/pedagogical research even when they were interested. Things have shifted a bit and I do support some pedagogical research – a colleague also runs a programme for research staff which is only partly on possible teaching they undertake.'*
> (Respondent 8)

> *'Development of researchers is done by researchers, where it is done at all!'* (Respondent 38)

> *'Often too discipline specific, but currently working on developing pedagogic research interests across a variety of disciplines.'*
> (Respondent 40)

Conclusions

The relationships between disciplinary research, pedagogic research and teaching are likely to be thrown into sharper relief in the near future in the UK as the various pressures and imperatives that are emerging in the UK higher education system begin to bite (Castree, 2011). The greater demands on teachers in higher education and the greater scrutiny of their practice through instruments such as the National Student Survey are likely to increasingly require that their teaching is underpinned by extensive scholarly activity of which, for many, disciplinary research is likely to be a, in many cases the, major element.

There is a potential tension likely to emerge in the near future within some institutions, and there were hints of this in the responses to this research, between pedagogic and disciplinary research. Whilst pedagogic research is likely to play an increasingly important role in ensuring the quality and dynamism of undergraduate (and postgraduate) teaching in an age of full student fees, this research is generally lower valued within the metrics of the national Research Excellence Framework than disciplinary research. In many disciplines pedagogic research is concentrated in post-1992 institutions which are less dependent than pre-1992 institutions on Research Excellence Framework and research council funding. In some instances staff in some pre-1992 institutions are discouraged from undertaking pedagogic research by departmental managers' favour of disciplinary research, which is potentially of more value within the national Research Excellence Framework.

In addition, academic researchers participating in this research spoke of a number of anxieties and tensions, and also the recognition of opportunities, within their own research practice that have prompted many to significantly change their research trajectories and areas. These anxieties, issues and opportunities are often handled 'in house', often informally through discussion with departmental colleagues or resolved by individuals themselves. In none of the 137 responses to the

survey of human geographers did anyone mention turning to their institutions' educational developers for support in changing their areas of research. There appears to be a widely held view that disciplinary research development is done within departments rather than more centrally within institutions. However, given the increasing interdependencies between teaching and research – and this research revealed the positive impacts that research change can have on teaching – this would appear to be an issue that needs some reappraisal. The survey revealed a widespread feeling amongst educational developers that they feel they have more to offer the development of disciplinary research and the enhancement of the teaching-research nexus through supporting both disciplinary and pedagogic research than they currently do. However, to realise this it would seem that there are some disciplinary and departmental barriers to address.

References

Castree, N. (2011) 'The future of geography in English universities', *Geographical Journal,* 177, pp. 294-299.

Demeritt, D. (2000) 'The new social contract for science: accountability, relevance and value in US and UK science and research policy', *Antipode,* 32, pp. 308-329.

Tim Hall is Subject Group Leader, Environmental and Social Sciences, and Lecturer in Geography and Criminology, at the University of Gloucestershire (thall@glos.ac.uk).

Acting on the 'knife edge': Incorporating role-play within the curriculum

Dr Chris Towers and **Ricky Gee,** Nottingham Trent University

Introduction

This is a reflective article which describes how we used role-play to facilitate student learning at Nottingham Trent University. The references to role-play within the discipline of social policy should not obscure the fact that it is an approach that has much wider application. We teach within the school of social science and have expertise and experience not only in social policy but in sociology, social work, youth studies and other areas, working across disciplines. We are seeking to influence teaching practice within the division by encouraging the use and development of role-play. We have presented findings to staff groups, with encouraging responses, and will continue to explore its application. This paper will highlight future plans to develop the use of role-play, building on initial experiences and facilitating greater student and staff involvement.

Our initial focus has been on the application of role-play within social policy. We are sure that studying social policy lends itself to role-play, as it asks students to empathise with and reflect upon vibrant, dynamic relationships between policy-makers and the wider public. Such relationships are contoured with issues of power, wealth, opportunity and inequality. Social policies affect welfare entitlement, and such entitlements, and the lives people live, are so often situated along a 'knife edge'.

Social policies themselves have the potential to place people on that very 'knife edge', where a decision, for example, to award or deny a benefit may significantly influence pathways through life. We used role-play to encourage learners to 'know' various knife-edges that present themselves in policy and practice. Learners were asked to explore and reflect on the boundaries of claims and claimants, the rights and wrongs as they saw them and the tension between competing ideas. Students themselves will have both direct and indirect experiences of social policy, the tensions, the power dynamics, the contradictions and the inequalities. However, students do not often acknowledge the relevance of such experiences when studying in the abstract. We are sure that exploration of 'lived experiences' through role-play allows students to recollect their own similar lived experiences and thus enrich their understanding of social policy.

Social policy is a diverse subject which spans many disciplines and it is taught to health and social care students at level one of their degree through subjects such as work and welfare, health, housing and education policy. Whilst these subjects are dynamic and related to the fabric of people's lives, the lived experience of social policy may be different from the one students encounter in the textbooks – as they lack the immediacy of the drama that is played out before them. Social policy can appear 'out of reach' for some students and it is therefore important to convey 'real world' experiences so that they can connect with curriculum content.

We use written case studies, video and other material to feature real-life stories of people whose lives are touched by social policy. We want students to consider their own experiences and how these may relate to policies. So we decided to introduce a dramatic element into the teaching with the use of role-play. We hoped that if students could 'see' social policies being enacted and discussed they might become alive to the tensions within relationships between service providers and those receiving services.

Method

We set up interview scenarios and played an interviewer and a service user. Students were asked to make judgments, via questions posed by the lecturers, as they watched. Then the final role-play involved two student volunteers who both played service users.

We did not use scripts. Instead we improvised with broad themes and prompts and the actors were free to develop their responses in ways more akin to 'real' encounters. We wanted spontaneous interaction both on the stage and between the students as they debated the issues presented to them. We hoped this would increase student involvement and enable them to express their feelings on the unfolding dramas during and after the sessions.

The first two tutors' role-plays were between an advisor and a claimant for Job Seeker's Allowance and between an Educational Welfare Officer and the father of a young girl who had not been attending school. In the final role-play students played two claimants for Employment Support Allowance.

The role-plays were with a course of around 100 students. To help students see the issues from various perspectives we prepared cards of various colours, each representing a certain kind of response to the questions arising from the action. We came out of role as we stopped the role-play at various points to pose questions around the issues raised. The students held aloft the appropriate card to indicate their responses to the questions we raised. They held aloft a green card, for example, if they felt the person being role-played should qualify for Job Seeker's Allowance or a red card if they felt this person was deemed not available for work. A yellow card would indicate that they were unsure about the matter. We then debated the issues with students for a short while before moving on to the next issue raised by the role-play.

The student volunteers created their characters and decided the ailments from which they would be suffering (depression and sciatica). These were researched for background material. We encouraged the students to be aware of different perspectives on the issues and to reflect different aspects of the claims in their performances. The audience needed to see how service users may have aspects of their 'story' that encourage different reactions and responses, sometimes sympathetic, sometimes not. This was the 'knife edge' of social policies and students needed to see it played out before them.

Blatner (2009) says that role-play can run into problems when used as an educational tool if students are not 'warmed up' for its use. So we used briefings and discussions for all the students the week before each enactment and also just prior to each session. This 'warming up' facilitated a good and enthusiastic response.

Reflecting on the 'real world'

Learning is not only about acquiring knowledge from existing sources such as traditional text books or journal articles, but from finding new forms of knowledge that expand our awareness of ourselves and how we see the world. This can include knowledge of how people live and how they make sense of the world around them. This kind of knowledge is not always documented and role-play allows it to come to the fore.

Understanding the 'knife edge' of social policies requires students to learn certain kinds of knowledge to understand the information relevant to decisions about entitlement. Such knowledge includes detailed policy references but also social and economic material about people's lives so that they can understand the contexts in which choices are presented and actions taken. Our students are encouraged to acquire knowledge from diverse sources and to be open to many different forms of evidence.

Both lecturers and students have many non-academic employment and broad life experiences to bring to role-play enactments. The sharing of these experiences can help the student in many ways, including their future employability. This particular role-play encourages reflection on the tensions in service delivery for both practitioners and service users, and the more students are aware of such tensions the more likely they are to be prepared as workers in a range of roles.

Role-play does however have a wider value beyond employment. It can be used in the classroom to develop ways of knowing the world that may not have been revealed to students. In this case, it facilitates insight into the private worlds of service users that may rarely be captured in public domains.

Learning through reflection

Blatner (2009), with reference to Jean Piaget, suggests that there are two modes of learning, namely 'assimilation' and 'accommodation'. Assimilation is when people figuratively 'fill in' their mental map of the world and by contrast 'accommodation' is when people change their mental map, expand or alter it to fit their new perceptions. Awareness of social policy, laws and their implementation, requires students to fill in their mental map and in this sense assimilate new knowledge. But they also need to accommodate new information and change their mental maps in the light of this new information.

Itin (1999) asserts how some students learn through reflection and it may be argued that through reflection students learn to accommodate new knowledge. Reflection is a feature of experiential learning and it contrasts with rote or didactic learning in which students acquire knowledge without necessarily reflecting upon it. Stavenga de Jong *et al.* (2006) develop this theme and argue that experiential learning contrasts with academic learning. Academic learning is the process of acquiring information through the study of a subject without the necessity for direct experience. Experiential learning has many features to it. This form of learning sees students analysing material but showing initiative in the process in the way they reflect on what they are knowing rather than simply consuming knowledge passively. Academic learning tends to focus on abstract classroom learning, but experiential learning tends to involve the student much more in the process of learning and thus claim more ownership of it. Role-play, and the way in which we carried it out, with students involved at all stages from its planning to its delivery, encouraged experiential learning. Students analysed material, reflected on it and then actively

engaged in the experience through seminar discussion and role-play itself. As a result they were more able to engage with and critique existing literature.

Learning from the role-play

Just as students can reflect on their learning, lecturers can reflect on their input. We observed that the exercises had a galvanising effect on students' learning and this has been apparent during and after the sessions. Students noticeably enjoyed being part of their own learning for social policy issues and debates were more vigorous and alive in the aftermath of the role-plays. We observed that students were often quite animated in their responses to questions of benefit entitlement having 'seen' the issues presented to them rather than just being 'told'. In relating to the teacher in different ways the student can become less inclined to be a passive learner and more inclined to take some control of the process. Although the role-plays took place in large groups, active student engagement was still made possible.

Students responded to the 'knife edge' scenarios that we presented to them and many students clearly saw the value of different perspectives and also the tensions that occur within social policy. This was evident in the way the students engaged actively with each other in the subsequent seminar discussions. They were more animated about the issues and argued more passionately. They recollected scenes from the role-plays to support their assertions about welfare entitlement. Their arguments contained more depth of awareness of how it may feel, for example, to be disqualified from Employment Support Allowance on the basis of an 'inadequate' assessment process.

We surveyed students on their responses to the role-plays by providing them each with a questionnaire at the commencement of each session. These asked for their feedback on the merits of role-play as a form of teaching and learning. The many responses included one student who remarked that they found it 'very helpful as it's a more in-depth way of understanding certain issues'. We also learned that students engaged through the exercise with the 'real world' of social policy decision-making. One student said 'I was able to visualise the scenarios in a working environment and learn how professionals reach decisions. It was both educational and informative'. They observed that 'I think you should do more of it; it helps the visual learners to remember the information. Everything was brilliant'. The students' enthusiasm for this style of learning was confirmed with 87% of the students present at the final session in which students themselves participated in the actual performance, saying that they found the session either 'very interesting' or 'interesting' and 87% of them found it 'very useful' or 'useful'.

Role-play facilitates a number of different purposes and has a number of educational advantages for learners. Our use of role-play within social policy and the feedback from students promoted experiential and enquiry-based learning as students valued the method as a learning tool. This was assimilative learning (Blatner, 2009) for some in that it allowed some students to 'fill in' their mental map of the world. Students found ways of incorporating knowledge not just from the lecture element but also from the role-play and used this to good effect in their examination answers. But the learning was also accommodative (Blatner, 2009) in that the role-play allowed students to enhance or develop their view of the world and to challenge their perceptions. For example, students observing the second role-play were moved to re-evaluate their understanding of depression and its relationship to being 'fit for work' and speculated, in subsequent seminar discussions, that someone could be 'fit' for everyday life but not necessarily fit for work.

The role-play challenged students' mental map of the world and their informal comments in seminar discussions confirmed this. Students displayed empathy towards the subject of the role-play and towards the issues. This is an important quality for those intending to work in health and social care, as is the capacity to reflect on the experiences both of others and through their own experience. Students also showed great interest in the narrative of the characters in the role-plays. This was demonstrated when a student, referring to a character in one of the role-plays, asked 'how did the person in the role-play fare in the end, did they qualify for Employment Support Allowance?' The fact that this student could not separate the reality from the fiction (all characters were fictional) showed not only that they believed that narrative is the central component in the construction of reality but that this narrative had challenged them to consider the nature of the realities they experienced and knew.

Conclusions

The findings from this article should hold interest for those whose job it is to advise on and implement changes in teaching practice. Role-play highlights the importance of the student voice and this voice can be heard across different subjects with the use of devices or themes such as the 'knife edge'. The idea of the 'knife edge' has been central to this exercise, both as a theme within the subject of social policy but as something for students to actively confront through their exposure to and involvement with role-play. The concept of the 'knife edge' could be useful across disciplines as it articulates a boundary, fateful crossroads where decisions and actions made have significant consequences. The concept would be apparent in many disciplines from law to psychology or from sociology to criminology.

Students came to 'know' the knife edge not through academic texts but through their own direct experience. They didn't just read about social policy, they saw it acted out before their very eyes and came close to a subject that can appear distant from what they know and experience. The 'warming up' sessions immersed students into the role-plays, giving them knowledge of service users' issues and problems but also of policy and practice. They also developed awareness of how these policies are lived, in all their complexity, but role-play could encourage awareness of other developments in other disciplines where students can be challenged to see convergence or indeed tension and discrepancies between what is taught in academic texts and what is 'known' through direct experience. Educators need to know how role-play makes learning more 'real' in that

it allows learners to get 'closer' to the subject by seeing its relevance and application. This would apply if used in social work, psychology, careers guidance or in many branches of the social sciences.

This article affirms the value not only of role-play as an interactive element in student-centred learning but also reminds those involved in the delivery of teaching of the importance of planning. Students' involvement in the planning as well as the delivery of the role-play, with briefings before the sessions and subsequent discussions in seminars, encouraged a sense of ownership or at least a sense that it included them in their own learning. This was particularly evidenced when students reflected that it helps them as visual learners. Students said that they could visualise the issues and were aware of how practitioners make decisions, and this new knowledge, this growing awareness, appeared to excite them. We perceived the students' enthusiasm in the way the group not only attended in good numbers but also how they communicated to each other and to ourselves during the sessions.

Social policy has a power dynamic to it and students saw this in the role-plays but experienced it as active participants, particularly in the third role-play when students acted out scenes. We brought our own employment and other experience to the role-plays and in sharing it with students we enhanced their awareness of how practitioners and service users may feel about and live with policies. The students' comments in seminars suggested that they had accommodated what they experienced into their mental maps but also assimilated it and it allowed them to challenge their existing perceptions. They learned through reflection and it galvanised their learning. They were helped to become more reflective learners and to have a better understanding of practice, making them more critical learners and potential practitioners. These teaching methods are suitable not only to the teaching of social policy but may be useful to teaching within other disciplines where students would gain from 'knowing' the 'knife edges' of policy and practice and developing their abilities to reflect upon them.

Future plans

The initial successes of role-play have encouraged us to expand its use both within our own teaching and promote its usage across the division. This method of experiential and enquiry-based learning has been shown to engage students and galvanise their interest and understanding of subject knowledge, evident from their improved level of engagement in lectures and seminars post-role-play. We therefore plan to involve students much more within the planning and delivery of the role-plays, building on what was achieved in earlier sessions. Student volunteers have so far had 'some' involvement in the creation of their characters but this area needs development. Whilst students will be asked to volunteer for the given roles, the wider student group could be more involved in the planning, performance and wider learning. More active student involvement from the whole student group in the creation of the characters will promote even greater insight and understanding of issues and depth of learning. Students will in the process be encouraged to have a greater level of ownership of their learning. We plan to develop role-play across different disciplines by disseminating findings from their work more widely and promoting it as an example of good teaching practice. Findings will be disseminated through the teaching and learning conference at Nottingham Trent University but also through other student and staff forums.

References

Blatner, A. (2009) 'Role-playing in education' (http://www.blatner.com/adam/pdntbk/rlplayedu.htm, accessed 29/06/11).

Itin, C. M. (1999) 'Reasserting the philosophy of experiential education as a vehicle for change in the 21st century', *Journal of Experiential Education,* 22 (2), pp. 91-98.

Stavenga de Jong, J. A., Wiersrtra, R. F. and Hermanussen, J. (2006) 'An exploration of the relationship between academic and experiential learning approaches in vocational education', *British Journal of Educational Psychology,* 76: 1, pp. 155-169.

Dr Chris Towers (christopher.towers2@ntu.ac.uk) and **Ricky Gee** (ricky.gee@ntu.ac.uk) are Lecturers/Senior Lecturers in Social Work and Professional Practice at Nottingham Trent University.

'Agents of Inter-change': the use of student placement learning technologists

Jim Turner, Alice Bird, Cheryl Connor, Alex Spiers and **Bethan Reid,** Liverpool John Moores University

At Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU), there have been a number of institutional level projects over the recent years, such as online submission, which have required staff to use new VLE tools or processes. This has highlighted some academic staff's lack of IT skills, and the need for more localised support. To meet this immediate shortfall, LJMU provided extra learning technology support for staff by employing six of its own computing students on work placements as learning technology officers (LTOs). As you can imagine, other benefits have arisen, coupled with some issues which we would like to take this opportunity to reflect on and share with the SEDA community. But first a little background.

LJMU has 24,000 students, studying an extensive range of subjects in a number of campuses across the city. It supports the 800 academic staff with access to a wide range of learning technologies, and in a number of cases, provides support through subject-specific learning technologists. However, some subject areas have no local learning technology support and

work with the small central Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) team, based in the Academic Enhancement Unit. This central team has many other responsibilities, for example, running institutional projects, such as online submission of coursework. An initiative to support this particular process was proposed, to help staff adapt and learn these new skills. Level 5 computing students were employed as Faculty-based full-time, placement learning technologists. This short-term measure had proved successful in the past (Bird, 2006) when the VLE was initially rolled out.

The candidates were chosen, not just for their level of IT knowledge, but for the soft skills that were required for this challenging role, including their abilities to persuade and negotiate. They were managed jointly by the head of the central TEL team and supervisors inside the faculties.

Details of the process

Faculties and Schools were consulted for their agreement on their involvement with the initiative. All but one School agreed. The role was modelled on similar roles within LJMU, but with a main focus on supporting academic staff in electronic submission of coursework and associated technical activities, rather than giving advice on pedagogy. LTOs were also tasked with providing more generic Blackboard support, as determined locally by the Schools within each Faculty. The new LTOs were formally inducted into LJMU and were provided with training which outlined their role and responsibilities. Additional guidelines were also provided about the boundaries of that role and where they could obtain help. The central TEL team was very aware of the ethical issues that might affect the new LTOs and the initial limitations of their technical knowledge. LTOs also benefited from standard induction within the Faculty where they were located. This induction was followed up by 'on the job' training and ongoing two-way connection between the teams. The new LTOs met formally, as a team, every month to review progress and discuss emerging issues and practices. LTOs could and did attend learning technology CPD sessions and learning technology forum meetings. There were also a number of specific projects that the LTOs worked on.

E-submission

This project has put the TEL team at the vanguard of large institutional adoption of new practices. Some staff have found the transition to the new practices difficult. However, in some areas, this is having a transformational effect on the way staff use technology to support students. Examples of this include; reviewing marks and feedback across a programme to support progression, providing students access to past feedback to support reflection, and enabling staff tracking of student engagement with feedback.

Reflection

Practice varied in terms of how the LTOs engaged with staff to support online submission and not all Schools and Faculties are using it at the same level. Where the LTOs were part of a larger team, they tended to use that team's existing connections and then widen connection with relevant staff from there on. LTOs without local teams used a variety of methods to connect with staff. For example, one regularly attended formal academic meetings within Schools. Some LTOs also benefited more than others through the level of support provided by their local supervisors. The role required LTOs to work with staff at different levels within their placement Faculty and to respond to different demands and challenges, depending on submission practices. They also needed to be aware of the privileged access that they had to students' feedback and grades and needed to act in accordance within the LJMU's code of conduct. The old issues of making connections with staff are obviously the same for the new LTOs. Early good feedback from staff helped to strengthen the LTOs resolve.

The breadth of what was asked of them by staff was, in most cases, accepted with enthusiasm. However, in some cases the LTOs saw themselves as working independently from the main team and, in a few cases, this led to mis-information being given on that particular tool. It was necessary for the central team to remind LTOs, on a number of occasions, that they should not be over-confident in their level of knowledge and to work in tandem with the central team. As first-line support, they reported as having to bear the brunt of staff issues. In most cases staff were sympathetic to their position, but a small number of staff were antagonistic towards them.

The TEL Action Plan

The LJMU TEL Action Plan was developed in 2010, following outcomes from an e-Learning Benchmarking exercise and recommendations within the Student Written Submission to the QAA Institutional Audit (2009). It includes two minimum requirements relating to the use of technology:

- all modules to contain important information such as handbooks and lecture notes
- increased innovative and interactive use of Blackboard (and other technologies) to enrich the learning experience.

LTOs supported these by reviewing all modules in Blackboard and then identifying any need for support. The central TEL team and LTOs, along with other Faculty/School-based support staff, then worked with academic staff, providing training and support in order to meet the minimum expectation.

Reflection

This process was very beneficial for the institution by providing very rich data indicating the degree to which learning technologies were embedded across Programmes, Schools and Faculties. The LTOs also highlighted any good practice they found, which again added to this rich picture and was disseminated across the Faculties. This identification and the criteria were developmental during the process, and highlighted the difference in what they judged as being exceptional. The LTOs judged course content organisation, the use of images and a welcoming site to be as important as online activities and the range of information provided.

LTO group project (digital literacy)

A number of national studies have identified the need to develop staff and student digital literacy, in order to meet the requirements of working/studying in a 21st-century environment. The LTOs were asked to run a group project looking at the emerging issue of digital literacy for both staff and students and to recommend how LJMU might help to further support this. They were given minimal guidance on the direction and structure that this project had to take. This allowed the students space to plan their approach to the research to be approved by LJMU's Ethics Committee (Barrigan *et al.,* 2011).

Structure of the research

The study used a free-text answer questionnaire with a return of approximately 120 staff and 1000 students across LJMU. The main finding was:

> *'The successful introduction and utilisation of any digital teaching aid will depend on the digital literacy of the users. Digital literacy is the ability for a student to be able to use the technology that is available to them in order to make the way they work more productive and efficient. Someone who is digitally literate is confident with technology and uses it to their advantage.'*
> (Barrigan *et al.,* 2011)

The LTOs identified and attended a JISC workshop on digital literacy. As a consequence they made connections with other projects in this area including the JISC Digidol project, which they consulted on several occasions. The results of their research were disseminated internally, entirely by the LTOs at the LJMU Learning and Teaching Conference (Barrigan *et al.,* 2012a) and, externally, at the Blackboard European Conference 2012 (Barrigan *et al.,* 2012b).

Final Reflections

This section will review the benefits and issues that emerged from the use of student placements as LTOs. On the whole, the project achieved its outcomes and recent additional policies, such as the introduction of anonymous marking of online submissions, have been identified as requiring additional support. Therefore, the institution is enlisting a further group of placement LTOs for this next academic year.

Benefits

Previous research has noted the benefits of students as change agents (Halvarsson and Lohela, 2009). Benefits include breaking down the culture of the consumer and increasing participation of students in the joint development of their educational experience. This current project also highlights the transformative effect of students on staff attitude towards technology. Although this area requires more in-depth research, some staff were more open to support from the LTOs. The students seemed to be able to transcend some of the traditional barriers of resistance faced by more formal development routes. For instance, one School which was previously very resistant to the adoption of online submission, adopted it this year for one of their largest modules. The School reported this change as only taking place because of the local support and the confidence inspired by the LTO. The students have also brought with them a tangible connection with the student experience. They allow the central TEL team, and the academic staff, to gain a better understanding of how students will receive and understand particular uses of technology.

It is anticipated that this project will continue to influence, as the students return to their Schools for their final year studies. Many of them are writing dissertations on this particular area of technology. These assignments could help the TEL team and potentially the School of Computing and Mathematical Sciences to further understand the experience from the students' perspectives. The students will interact with the staff on their courses, perhaps further influencing their adoption of technology and making them aware of what technology can do to support student learning.

The LTOs have also provided a platform to raise awareness of learning technology and the services provided by the central TEL team, building on the network links and opening up a dialogue between learning technologists and academic staff.

This has been a challenging process that has affected the views held about the skills of the LTOs, by both the team and the staff. Training was ongoing and there was an overall increase in the demand for support from the central team, who were required to both troubleshoot and support the LTOs. However, the team believes this represents a significant innovation in coping with a rapid short-term expansion in demand. The effects have challenged the perceptions of all those involved and helped staff, student LTOs and the team work together to reassess technological adoption.

Issues

There are many issues involved in the use of LTOs. Although the existing LTO teams centrally and locally in the Faculty welcomed the additional support, there are obviously tensions around the responsibility of the long-term investment in existing staff provision and development. The use of such a process as a long-term solution raises concerns over the level of provision, in terms of the specialised skills and knowledge a learning technologist should have (Oliver, 2002).

This change in practice that the new LTOs brought was explained to existing LTOs who were supported through this change. Care was taken to define roles and responsibilities so as not to place the new LTOs in positions where greater experience was required. Although these efforts were made, it is difficult to assess that this helped calm all the anxieties caused by the new appointments.

The claim that this project is linked to the idea of 'students as agents of change' can be challenged. The LTOs were employees of the university, recruited for a specific role. Although there were elements of freedom within that role, LTOs could be seen as not given a full opportunity to benefit the institution in changing practice by

giving their particular points of view. For instance, LTOs voiced concerns over some aspects of practice and the constraints of their actions within the role. In some ways, this could be viewed as the students learning how things work in the 'real' world, but it also highlights an opportunity missed by the institution in learning, from their perspective.

The experience for the LTOs was also noticeably different depending on the area of their placement. Areas with an existing LTO team offered additional support but also, in some cases, controlled the extent to which they could operate. The style of the local management of LTOs, to some extent, predicted the scope and level of connection or access the LTOs might have to academic staff and their time. Different Schools and Faculties have different levels of, and approaches to, their adoption of technology. For instance, a number of LTOs were invited to attend formal academic meetings in the Schools, but this was not the norm. Finally, the LTOs all developed different strategies and styles of working with staff. They shared these experiences at the monthly meetings and in between, but not all their ideas were transferable. Each LTO's personality, tenacity and approachability led to each reporting very different work placement experiences. The next cohort will benefit from these work placement experiences, as a crossover period between the two teams of LTOs has been organised. The breadth of subject areas from which the new students are to be recruited is potentially widened. The level of IT skill identified for the first cohort was very important, but there is recognition that other skills could be equally valuable.

Conclusion

We recognise that the student LTOs do not represent a long-term solution for the progress of adoption of technology. The skills and knowledge required to identify needs, design solutions and deliver them are complex and require years of experience and knowledge (Oliver, 2002). However, there is evidence that students on placement in LTOs provide the staff they support with a different perspective on the adoption of technology. The enthusiasm taken forward from this complex project has reaped benefits and, in some areas, the adoption of not only the learning technology but the learning technologist themselves. This has led many staff to appreciate what a local learning technologist can offer, not only in supporting skill development but also as an Agent of Change.

References

Barrigan, D., Boyle, S., Dutton, T., Lee, K. M., McNeilis, K. and O'Donnell, R. (2011) *Ethics Submission for Digital Literacy Project*.

Barrigan, D., Boyle, S., Dutton, T., Lee, K. M., McNeilis, K. and O'Donnell, R. (2012a) *Blackboard at its Best,* LJMU Teaching and Learning Conference 2012, Liverpool UK.

Barrigan, D., Boyle, S., Dutton, T., Lee, K. M., McNeilis, K. and O'Donnell, R. (2012b) *Digital Literacy – From the Inside Out: case studies from student placements exploring digital literacy with academic staff and students,* Blackboard Teaching and Learning Conference 2012, Antwerp, Belgium.

Bird, A. (2006) *Change in Collaboration over Time: a specific case in a student work placement scenario,* International Research Conference, Lancaster UK, 10-12 April 2006.

Halvarsson, Y. and Lohela, M. I. (2009) 'Students as co-producers of education: cases from student participation in the educational programmes of a Swedish university', Master's Thesis, Lulea University of Technology.

Oliver, M. (2002). 'What do Learning Technologists do?', *Innovations in Education and Teaching International,* 39(4), pp. 245-250.

Alice Bird is Head of Technology Enhanced Learning, **Cheryl Connor** is a Learning Technology Developer and **Jim Turner, Alex Spiers** and **Bethan Reid** are Learning Technology Officers, all at Liverpool John Moores University.

Everyone needs a mentor? The SEDA PDF Award in Mentoring and Coaching

Angela Benzies and **Elaine Mowat,** Edinburgh Napier University

Mentoring is widely recognised as a win-win-win approach to professional development, offering benefits to both mentors and mentees and to their organisations (Clutterbuck, 2004). Where mentoring happens in an academic practice context in higher education, it is often done quietly by experienced and enthusiastic individuals who are generous with their time in helping their colleagues; more often than not, those individuals have had no formal education or training in mentoring and gain no recognition for their work. The SEDA PDF Award opens up a new opportunity to foster the development of academic practice through mentoring and/or coaching and to allow staff who support colleagues in this way to share, reflect on and celebrate their work.

The origins of the SEDA PDF Award lie within the context of Edinburgh Napier University's Teaching Fellowship Scheme (Edinburgh Napier University, 2012). The Teaching Fellow application process requires an extensive reflective account of academic practice against the University's applications criteria, presented as a portfolio, and the role of the mentor, who is an established Teaching Fellow, is to assist the candidate in exploring and communicating their current achievements and future development plans. Professor Diana Eastcott, external assessor to the Scheme, offered her expertise in mentoring to support the internal development work carried out by the Teaching Fellowship Scheme Coordinator.

It very quickly became apparent that the scope for enhancement of mentoring within academic practice was much broader than the requirements of this particular scheme and could support staff at various stages of their careers. Initial teacher development, both in secondary and tertiary education, often includes the assignment of a more senior colleague as a mentor to assist the new teacher in meeting probationary or other contractual requirements; but academic practice following this stage is often relatively unsupported in a one-to-one manner, even where it might be indicated by changing role or work environment. Consideration of coaching as a means to enhance academic practice was thought about later in the development process and it was agreed that its inclusion in a new award specification would be important in increasing its usefulness and in recognising coaching as part of a range of beneficial interventions.

Having shared at the spring 2011 PDF workshop the intention to create a SEDA-recognised programme using an existing award title, advice from those present was to design a new one, as mentoring and coaching seemed to be a useful addition to the set. Throughout the SEDA award development, Stephen Bostock and Carol Maynard of the SEDA PDF Committee, as well as Diana Eastcott, provided invaluable advice and support to the Award author, Angela Benzies.

Development of the SEDA PDF Award was the precursor to the creation of the Edinburgh Napier Mentoring/Coaching Award (ENMCA). This vision for the ENMCA is the enhancement of academic practice throughout the University, while building capacity in the area of mentoring and coaching among those involved in teaching and the support of learning. The aim is to do this by providing some theoretical underpinning in mentoring and coaching in conjunction with practice involving volunteer mentees. Importantly, successful engagement with the ENMCA provides formal acknowledgement of the participant's competence in this area, and obtaining a qualification was seen by participants to be attractive from a career development point of view, even more so if that qualification were externally recognised.

The ENMCA itself started as a pilot in January 2012, had a recognition event in March of that year and was formally recognised by SEDA in June 2012. The programme comprises mentoring and coaching theory and practice, including consideration of typical applications, ten hours of practice by each participant with mentees or coachees who are engaged in some form of academic practice, and consideration of future development as a mentor/coach. The input is provided by four workshops, some featuring guest speakers, along with online resources and discussions provided through Moodle. The detailed content has been developed in partnership between the Academic Practice and Academic Professional Development functions of the University and seeks to provide a high quality, interactive and flexible approach to the enhancement of academic practice for those engaged in teaching or the support of learning. Starting with such questions as 'what is the difference between coaching and mentoring?', the ENMCA relates theory to participant practice and encourages each individual to develop their own style within a framework of a developmental model of mentoring and coaching. Assessments from the pilot were deeply insightful in many cases, and showed that mentors, as well as mentees, learn in these one-to-one relationships, with some mentor reflections on the process being quite moving.

Recruitment for the 2012/13 ENMCA has been successful and there is a rich variety of experience, talent and perspective among the group that bodes well for some interesting discussions at workshops and online. As to the future, the increased interest in obtaining the various categories of Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy following the launch of the revised UKPSF, as well as the continual challenge of responding to various measures of academic practice excellence and the student experience, would seem to offer many opportunities for mentoring and coaching and its development as a means of enhancing practice. The importance to staff of institutional investment in their development is also highly significant. The SEDA PDF and courses such as the ENMCA may well offer a framework for helping to achieve these aims.

References

Clutterbuck, D. (2004) *Everyone Needs a Mentor: fostering talent in your Organisation,* 4th edn., London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Edinburgh Napier University (2012) 'Teaching Fellowship Scheme' (http://tinyurl.com/98vsz3c).

SEDA (2011) 'PDF Award Mentoring and Coaching' (http://tinyurl.com/8qjpsjg).

Angela Benzies is a Senior Lecturer in HE Academic Practice in the Office of the Vice-Principal (Academic), Coordinator of the Edinburgh Napier University Teaching Fellowship Scheme, and Programme Leader for the ENMCA.

Elaine Mowat is an Academic Development Advisor in Academic Professional Development, Human Resources and Development, Edinburgh Napier University, and a Programme Tutor on the ENMCA.

Information for Contributors

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

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

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

How much do students need to know about pedagogy?

Debbie McVitty, National Union of Students

If education were to be included in media hot lists, then engaging students as partners in learning would be up there with the latest It Girl handbag. Thanks to the QAA, HEA and, yes, NUS, institutions now have a range of tools and examples of practice at their disposal to support the engagement of students as partners.

The very trendiness of student engagement is itself a cause for some concern; as projects and initiatives spring up like mushrooms we should probably ask whether student engagement is best served by a thousand flowers blooming or by a deep shift in how institutions imagine the relationship between an institution, its staff, its students and its students' union.

Of late NUS has been thinking around the topic of partnership and interested parties can look up, for example, our Manifesto for Partnership which argues that student engagement is best conceived of as delivered through partnership between an institution and students' union, rather than student engagement being, itself, partnership.

However, a topic more suited to these pages than that of partnership wholesale is the question of whether it would enhance any prospective learning partnership for students to have a greater understanding of the pedagogical evidence available to their lecturers and the educational developers who support them.

By way of example: at a recent sector event a colleague (who is employed at a senior level by a higher education institution) raised the question of how to manage a situation in which students' desires or preferences are in opposition to the available evidence of what pedagogical strategies best serve students' learning. In this case, first-year students were adamant that they wanted the marks for their assessments, even though the research suggests that provision of marks at an early stage encourages an unhelpfully instrumental approach to learning.

I would suggest that institutions that take pride in being responsive to 'what students want' are operating within a category error. The purpose of student representation has never been to transmit student desires unmediated, but through systematically facilitating a collective (but heterogeneous) student voice to secure educational and organisational change that serves the interests of students.

Arguably the current preoccupation with student satisfaction rather than student learning does not support students to give their feedback to academic staff in any meaningful way. Thus, the illusion of feedback not only creates bad feeling and miscommunication between students and teachers (in many cases confirming long-held prejudices on each side) but presents a barrier to actual pedagogical development taking place on the part of either students or teachers.

The story has a happy ending, by the way – the students who were so keen to get their marks were shown the evidence and persuaded. Through developing the students' understanding of pedagogy the conversation which started as oppositional shifted to negotiating around how students' anxieties and concerns about their learning progress could be managed.

It is possible to imagine a scenario in which academics conduct serious conversations with students in which pedagogical decisions are challenged or defended with reference to the evidence rather than to feelings or unsubstantiated beliefs. At the very least students' academic induction and the training of course representatives could include some reference to an educational philosophy. This would have the added benefit of making explicit the existence of pedagogical choices and variation in pedagogical positions, too much of which remains tacit at present.

But there is much to critique here – not least the question of how space could be found in the already-bursting curriculum to support developing students' understanding of pedagogy.

Such a move would be in danger of entrenching an institution-owned model of teaching quality – one that ensured that any attempt on the part of students to make suggestions on how their course should develop would be shouted down on the basis of a critique of the selected evidence or of insufficient evidence.

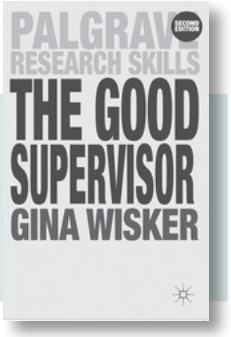
Decisions about which evidence students would need to understand would probably be taken by academics or educational developers who, although they have a real and abiding concern for students, are not themselves students. That is, unless, the students' union took a much greater role in picking up the pedagogical agenda. Questions like these illustrate why students' unions are so crucial to any attempt at a partnership approach between students and institutions.

Students' unions and educational developers are natural allies in the project of educational development and change: if partnership is happening then here is an excellent place to start.

The NUS Manifesto for Partnership is available at: http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/campaigns/highereducation/

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

Book Review



The Good Supervisor
Gina Wisker

2nd edition, 2012:
Palgrave Macmillan

Gina's first edition of *The Good Supervisor* was published in 2005 in a world where it was still being argued that the doctoral supervision process was under-theorised. We cannot claim that this is true any longer, so the question has to be: has this new edition kept up with all the new theories and the developments in doctoral education?

I have to confess some conflicts of interest in reviewing this book. Gina Wisker and I have both written books on the same subject (albeit from different viewpoints), we both run supervisor development courses and we co-own the JISC list for those undertaking educational doctorates (EDUCATION-DOCTORATES@JISCMAIL.AC.UK).

Nonetheless, I could not resist the chance to review the second edition of Gina's book, and hope very much that our working relationship will survive the challenge!

The book has most relevance to academics working in the social sciences, humanities, performing arts, health and related areas. It is nearly 200 pages longer than the first edition, but the structure remains essentially the same. The author takes her reader on a journey in four parts through the supervision process from: getting started; establishing research processes and practices; working with students to managing the research completion and beyond. She aims the section on 'Working with students – Issues for supervisors' at the experienced supervisor, and the other three parts are going to be of greatest interest to those who are new to supervision. However, the whole book is suitable for those supervising both undergraduate and postgraduate students. She has included the newer work on academic identities, international student learning, cross-cultural supervision, engaging with critical and indigenous methodologies, student resilience and wellbeing, and postgraduate learning and learner practices.

The narrative takes account of some major changes that have happened in higher education: the evolution of educational and professional doctorates, the work of UK Grad/Vitae on the Researcher Development Framework, increasing student numbers and the commodification of students. Specifically it includes some recent work on conceptual threshold-crossing and is, like the first edition, full of practical activities for the supervisor to use. The author has much experience of supervising groups of students doing research, and the many academics who do the same will find her suggested group activity sessions particularly helpful.

There are several other great strengths of this new edition: her definitions of key terms (epistemology, ontology, methodology and method) are clear and sadly lacking in so much other literature that we encounter. Her experience of working internationally shines through with many examples of how to support international students including from Australia, Israel and the Caribbean through to South Africa. Equally her sympathy for and understanding of the challenges faced by part-time students, some of whom have been working at a distance, is very relevant as this group of research students is growing in many universities. In addition, the new supervisor will find the example of the progress or transfer report helpful, as well as a long section on preparing the student for examination and preparing to become an examiner.

The author says that this new book also takes account of her own more recent research, and in the next edition (which I am sure will emerge) it would be really helpful to know more about the methodological approach and the methods employed in the parallel project that she refers to. Similarly, a more critical examination of the work on learning styles might be helpful. Examples of ethical issues and dilemmas that both students and supervisors might meet are referred to at various points of the book, and I anticipate that this will be a growing area of concern for supervisors. Another developing area that concerns supervisors on my workshops is how, in this turbulent world, they can give useful careers advice when they themselves may have only had experience of their own career as an academic. There are some comments on this in the book, but it might be a good area to focus on even more.

Early on in this new edition is a considered review of research that has emerged since 2005. This book is no hasty revision of a first edition, it is a thoughtful deepening and updating of an earlier work, from a prolific writer and experienced supervisor.

Anne Lee (www.drannelee.wordpress.com) is an Independent Academic Developer and the author of *Successful Research Supervision,* published in 2012 by Routledge.

Let's Talk! Using Dialogue Days as a Student Engagement Activity

Mandy Asghar, York St John University

Like many universities, York St John (YSJ) has sought to engage students in innovative ways both with their own learning and as part of a student representative system in order that they can provide feedback on those learning experiences. Dialogue days are one such activity that has been used at YSJ over the last five years and that research, funded by a SEDA grant, is beginning to show cuts across both aspects of student engagement. This article will describe the practical ways in which we have developed and delivered dialogue days at YSJ, share some of the challenges they bring with suggestions as to how they might be overcome, and provide a brief insight into the student response to this activity.

Background

In the wider context of the literature there is the suggestion that engagement is generally about students becoming more connected to the institution and to each other (Axelson and Flick, 2011) in ways that positively influences their learning. Trowler's (2010) useful review of the student engagement literature sets out key aspects of student engagement. What we are trying to achieve through dialogue days, in particular, relates to the idea that investment in this activity (by both staff and students) can bind students together with each other and to staff, as opposed to seeing university life as just another appointment in their calendar. Trowler suggests that this type of activity taking place outside the classroom encourages interaction with staff and can have a powerful effect on learning and lead to enhanced student success. At YSJ we have therefore continued to evolve ways in which to engage students as a community that stretches beyond that of purely the student rep system. The aim is that the more collaborative is the staff/student relationship, the more knowledge and expertise will be developed by both (Dunne and Zandstra, 2011). I personally believe that the use of dialogue days spans several dimensions of student engagement and it is this crossover that provides the positive outcomes that many of the students and staff report as a consequence of participating.

Local context

Dialogue Days first became a part of the culture of engaging students at YSJ over five years ago within the Faculty of Arts, and it must be acknowledged that key members of academic staff in that Faculty were responsible for first initiating this type of practice into the student experience. I first became involved as an educational developer two years ago when I was asked to facilitate a dialogue day for staff and students in the sports subject area about the subject of research and how it is embedded within the curriculum. This was followed by a second dialogue day for the same team that challenged both staff and students to reflect on their assessment experiences. As with all these types of activities, the days have subsequently iteratively developed as different academics have embraced the possibility of providing spaces to engage with their students in new ways. For me as an educational developer, they have been a really useful way of working collaboratively with academics and have helped me to understand the discipline and the challenges that individual subject areas face. As an outsider with a remit for enhancing the student experience, indirectly through my staff-facing role, it can also be quite enlightening to hear what's really happening in the classroom from the conversations on the day.

So what is a Dialogue Day?

Dialogue Days are either half or whole days, structured into tasks and activities that create sparks to promote 'talk' about a variety of topics. The topic or theme of the day is pre-determined. Topics have included assessment, research, generally exploring students' expectations of the course and issues related to employability. Students and staff are brought together, in an environment separate from that used for everyday teaching and learning, to have a 'dialogue'. All staff and all students are invited to the event with the aim of broadening the opportunity beyond just those students who are course reps, and there is the expectation that all staff from that particular course team will engage in the activity. It seems to work best when students attend from all years so that conversations amongst the students can be as rich, diverse and interesting as that between staff and students.

We see dialogue as being a process where personal meanings are uncovered and shared through conversation between students, between staff and between staff and students. Bohm (1996) suggests that for something new to emerge from communication, people must listen and be prepared to change views and opinions, otherwise 'the problem of communication' just becomes exacerbated. So our dialogues aim to be conducted through 'connected knowing' as a means to understand, without prejudice or pre-judgement, another individual's perspective as they experience it (Brockbank and McGill, 2007). Seen as serving a variety of purposes, dialogue days provide educational development for staff and students to prompt their thinking which we hope will lead to changes in the curriculum at either a micro or macro level, or to change previously held views about what both staff and students think and expect in their higher education experiences. It is this 'talk' that brings them together as a shared community of practice:

> *'…There were things I was frustrated about really, so what*

I wanted was to basically have the opportunity to put those views across, which I thought was brilliant. I thought right, this is my chance to speak up...but then to actually understand process which obviously I never had before that day, but to understand process kind of made me realise, well you know there's quite a big job in marking a hundred assignments.' (Occupational Therapy student)

Running a dialogue day

Educational Developers are ideally placed to promote this type of development opportunity and to chair and facilitate the event. Both staff and students have valued the neutrality of a chair as external to their subject area and therefore having no vested interest in siding with any particular group. It can also highlight learning needs of staff that may need to be sensitively addressed at a later date.

Selling the idea to academic staff is the first challenge and we have overcome this by using initial successes in one area as a means to promote their value to both staff and students, and to secure buy-in and sufficient resources to run other events. It is also important to win over a key member of staff who will act in an advocacy role to convince staff and students of the benefits.

Selling the idea to students can also be challenging and a variety of strategies has been used to get on board more than just the usual committed group. One course team made the activity compulsory for students, embedding it in the programme; another took theatre students away from campus, combining the dialogue event with an opportunity to view an art exhibition. Others have used local venues with the promise of a free lunch and the opportunity to engage with staff in a different way. While those ideas may not sound radical, our evaluation suggests that the students have really welcomed the 'new space' and it has made them feel special or as one student put it:

> *'It was nice coz it took my mind off uni coz I wasn't at Uni anymore coz I was at a sculpture park and I was chatting about my progression and my life so to speak. So I think it's really important it comes important to take it out of Uni to take the Uni element out of your head in a way so you can chat more freely about other things.'*

Students commented in their feedback that they really were not sure what they were coming to and this has made us think about strategies we might use in future to market the event more effectively. I would suggest that others planning this sort of event need to be able to sell the concept to students, particularly if your dialogue day is to be a voluntary activity. Once there, however, the students have overwhelmingly reported how much they enjoyed the opportunity to participate. The overall success of dialogues days has resulted in their inclusion in our action plan for the YSJ Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2012-2015, with staff encouraged to run annual 'dialogue days' as a way of creating better shared meanings between staff and students.

Themes and activities

Deciding on a theme is the first task. Often a subject area has an issue that has arisen through student feedback that is difficult to unpack and a dialogue day provides the opportunity to explore in depth the varying voices and opinions of a wider range of students and as a way of achieving a common understanding. As you might imagine the most popular theme has been assessment. The common complaint from students is the lack or lateness of feedback and the common complaint from staff is the lack of engagement by students in the feedback they have spent time constructing. Moving both parties closer to a shared understanding in this area through dialogue has been stimulated through the use of a variety of activities. We have found that different disciplines respond best to the types of activities that suit their speciality. Those in Arts tended to be more creative while the examples shown here were developed in collaboration with the course leader for Sport.

The types of activities included asking students to work in groups to solve a problem alongside a member of staff. A typical assessment problem is demonstrated in Tables 1 and 2.

The Problem: You are running a module that has 60 students on it. The assessment is an essay worth 100% of the module and this was submitted by 58 students in week 12. Another member of staff has taught on the module and will mark half of the essays. Using the timeline resource, plan how you are going to provide feedback on these assignments. While doing this you will need to consider some of the following issues (a member of staff can help to clarify some of these):

- How feedback will be provided to the students
- Download and upload to the VLE
- Where are the other 2 essays?
- Entering marks onto the system
- Preparing a sample for the external examiner
- First marking and ensuring consistency between assessors
- Second marking/moderation
- All documentation and marks are ready for the subject assessment panel
- You might want a holiday!
- University exam committee

Table 1 Assessment problem (part 1)

Semester	Semester 1							Semester 2				
Date	12 Dec 11	19 Dec 11	26 Dec 11	02 Jan 12	09 Jan 12	16 Jan 12	23 Jan 12	30 Jan 12	06 Feb 12	13 Feb 12	20 Feb 12	27 Feb 12
Week	12	Vacation	Vacation	Vacation	13	14	0	1	2	3	4	5
Activity	Submission										Subject Assessment Panel	Uni Exam Board

Table 2 Assessment problem (part 2)

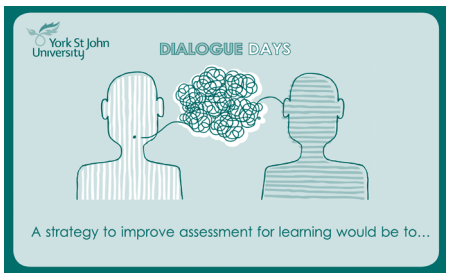


Figure 1 Dialogue Card

Other considerations

It is important to think about when a dialogue day takes place within the context of the whole curriculum. Where we have facilitated half-days some students felt that insufficient thought was given to what they were doing with the rest of the day and this made it a long day for some.

Setting ground rules, as with any group activity, is key. The chair's role is highly important in ensuring that both students and staff feel that they are in a safe environment where they can say what they think. Students have really enjoyed having dialogue days off campus and at the very least it is important to take them to an environment that is not their normal classroom. For effective dialogue to take place the power relations that occur within the classroom need to be set aside and an unfamiliar environment can help achieve this.

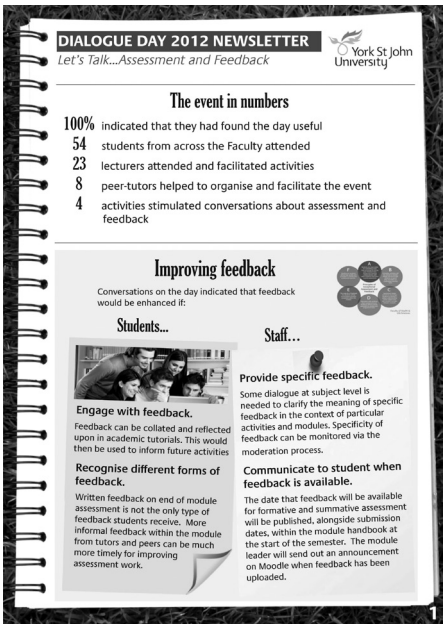
You need to consider whether your dialogue days should be voluntary or compulsory for staff and students. Most of our dialogue days have been voluntary for students but occasionally they have been compulsory and replaced a teaching session. In those compulsory events, students reflected that it had been a worthwhile experience and were quite scathing about peers who had failed to turn up.

Sharing outcomes

Closing the loop is important for students (and staff). Initial research findings suggest that some of the outcomes of the day can be quite subtle – such as *something that I always thought was true – now I see it differently;* or the breaking down of barriers between staff and students normally exercised in the classroom; enlightenment through having the opportunity to engage with peers from other years and hearing from them what it's really like as you progress. Some students felt that it gave them an opportunity to air things that they felt they wouldn't necessarily bother their course rep with.

> *'I felt relieved, had lots of things burning up inside me that I just wanted to get off my chest.' 'At the end of the day we are all here to mix and mingle and make work together. Everyone is an adult and should be treated in that way.'*

Other outcomes included staff promising to change particular practices. Sharing those outcomes can be really important as the Dialogue Day Newsletter shows (Figure 2).


DIALOGUE DAY 2012 NEWSLETTER
Let's Talk...Assessment and Feedback
York St John University

The event in numbers

100%	indicated that they had found the day useful
54	students from across the Faculty attended
23	lecturers attended and facilitated activities
8	peer-tutors helped to organise and facilitate the event
4	activities stimulated conversations about assessment and feedback

Improving feedback

Conversations on the day indicated that feedback would be enhanced if:

Students...

Engage with feedback.
Feedback can be collated and reflected upon in academic tutorials. This would then be used to inform future activities

Recognise different forms of feedback.
Written feedback on end of module assessment is not the only type of feedback students receive. More informal feedback within the module from tutors and peers can be much more timely for improving assessment work.

Staff...

Provide specific feedback.
Some dialogue at subject level is needed to clarify the meaning of specific feedback in the context of particular activities and modules. Specificity of feedback can be monitored via the moderation process.

Communicate to student when feedback is available.
The date that feedback will be available for formative and summative assessment will be published, alongside submission dates, within the module handbook at the start of the semester. The module leader will send out an announcement on Moodle when feedback has been uploaded.

1

Figure 2 Dialogue Day newsletter

Conclusion

While the *products* of these days can sometimes not amount to much, I strongly believe it is the *process* of participating that has the most powerful effects. Dialogue days provide a moment to reflect collaboratively on what it is we are trying to achieve individually and collectively, a kind of time-out moment. An early suggestion from the research study is that there are both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits in engaging. Intrinsic in that participants change their views and opinions and feel differently about how they might communicate subsequently with others. Extrinsically small things have changed as the Newsletter demonstrates. Overall it cannot be underestimated that the most common aspect where students feel that dialogue days have made a difference is in their relationships with staff:

> *'But by the time we'd finished that activity maybe twenty, twenty-five minutes, I felt like she was more a friend.'*

> *'I think in the university situation the tutors I've seen are more tutors than friends so to speak. But when you leave (the dialogue day) they don't lose that status but they kind of, they're not as tutory any more.'*

My experiences of dialogue days have been overwhelmingly positive and I hope that some of you may be inspired to consider how you might use this kind of format to engage a wider body of students beyond that of your course representatives. My best memory was the excitement and buzz created in an ancient hall in York with a group of staff and students who had started off the day unsure of each other but by the end of the day had come together as a community actively listening, laughing and sharing ideas.

Thanks to Dr Ian Sadler and Dasha Zhurauskaya who created the resources for the activities and to all the staff who have come up with creative ways of engaging in dialogue days across YSJ.

References

Axelson, R. and Flick, A. (2011) 'Defining student engagement', *Change,* Jan/Feb, 2011.

Bohm, D. (1996) *On Dialogue,* Routledge, London.

Brockbank, A. and McGill, I. (2007) *Facilitating Reflective Learning in Higher Education,* 2nd ed., Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press, London.

Dunne, E. and Zandstra, R. (2011) 'Students as change agents, new ways of engaging with learning and teaching in Higher Education', Escalate and the University of Exeter (tinyurl.com/d4jdbd8).

Trowler, V. (2010) 'Student engagement literature review', HEA (tinyurl.com/csktevb).

Mandy Asghar is the Head of Learning and Teaching Development at York St John (m.asghar@yorksj.ac.uk).

Academic Development for the Digital University – SEDA Summer School 2012 and 2013

David Baume, Higher Education Consultant

2012 SEDA Summer School

Twenty-four academic developers and learning technologists took part in 'Academic Development for the Digital University', the 2012 SEDA Summer School, 9-11 July, at Cumberland Lodge in Windsor Great Park. The facilitators were Sue Thompson, Sue Beckingham, Carole Baume and David Baume. Guest sessions were run by Lawrie Phipps from JISC and Lindsay Jordan from the University of the Arts, London.

Each participant brought a development project to work on – in workshops, in action learning sets and in informal discussions.

Twelve of the participants received 50% scholarships from JISC, for which SEDA is grateful. Blog posts from JISC-funded participants, on the Summer School and on ideas gained and developed there, are being gathered at http://elearningprogs.jiscinvolve.org/wp/.

The evaluations are very positive, as this summary of responses to the major elements of the Summer School shows:

Excellent	Good	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
104	79	25	1

The Summer School attracted participants with a great variety of interests and expertise in fields including academic development and learning technology. This variety provided a great resource for participants. It also provided a considerable challenge for workshop specification, design and operation! But it is clear from responses that participants valued working with people from different backgrounds and expertise.

As in previous SEDA Summer Schools, the action learning sets were very popular, providing each participant with a smaller group in which to share, test and develop ideas. Feedback shows a clear need for more time for informal discussion, accompanied by exploring Windsor Great Park. In advertising the 2012 Summer School we promised 'There will be time to think'. In 2013, more!

The workshop sessions for the most part received positive or very positive feedback, together with valuable suggestions for changes, which we shall follow.

SEDA Summer School 2013, 'Academic Development for the Digital University', will run Monday to Wednesday, 15-17 July. The residential fee will be held at £795. SEDA Summer School 2012 was over-subscribed. To hold a place for 2013, please contact office@seda.ac.uk.

David Baume SFSEDA is a higher education consultant. He is project manager for the SEDA/JISC Developing Digital Literacies project and critical friend and evaluation consultant to the JISC Transformations programme (david@davidbaume.com)

Contemplative practices in Higher Education: Breathing heart and mindfulness into the staff and student experience

Jennifer Bright and **Helen Pokorny,** University of Westminster

Introduction

There is a concern that many students in Higher Education experience stress and anxiety and that the curriculum may be under pressure to become an instrumental, narrowly vocational space. 'The culture and size of the institutions and settings where people teach, the emphasis upon achieving grades and gaining marketable skills, and the pressure to "produce" all take their toll' (Smith, 2005). This has implications for the wellbeing of staff. Parker Palmer, the US educator, has stated 'The only gift we have to give to our students is ourselves' (Palmer, 2009, p12). If staff feel under pressure, the open and relaxed 'posture' necessary to relate fully with students, and which allows the involvement of the whole person, is restricted, as is the ability to give students the gift of oneself.

One project which focuses on introducing spaces into the curriculum for creativity, reflection and personal growth is that of Dr. Jan Sellers' National Teaching Fellowship Labyrinth Project at the University of Kent. In her article for *Educational Developments* (Sellers, 2009), she writes of the labyrinth as offering 'a quiet contemplative space…and a structured time and place for individual reflection'. Along with Dr. Sellers and colleagues at London Metropolitan and Anglia Ruskin University, we ran a SEDA-funded workshop offering participants the opportunity to think about labyrinths as a tool for promoting contemplative practices and to learn how to create their own labyrinth cheaply and quickly.

The workshop was facilitated by specialists Jeff and Kimberly Saward of Labyrinthos (www.labyrinthos.net). Participants (lecturers, counsellors and student support workers) agreed to being surveyed later about their experience and ideas for using the labyrinth in their work. The aim of this article is to introduce the growing body of literature around contemplative/mindfulness pedagogies and their reported benefits (Hart, 2004; Langer, 1993, 1997, 2000; Palmer and Zajonc, 2010; Zajonc, 2009), and to report on our workshop.

Clarification of terms

Before going any further, however, it would be valuable to clarify some distinctions between how the terms contemplation, mindfulness and reflection are understood and used within this article. What seems to distinguish them is the degree to which the thinking mind is engaged.

Reflection is understood by some to be about retrospective thinking (cf. Schöen's reflection-on-action). Bolton describes it as 'an in-depth consideration of events or situations… from a variety of angles' (Bolton, 2010, p. 13). Contemplation, however, is a holding of something (e.g. a question, an object, a line of poetry) within the being, within the body/mind. A contemplative stance suggests this intention of an internal holding or beholding. 'Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally' (Kabat-Zinn, 2006, p. 7) and requires a conscious bringing back of the attention to the present moment. The terms 'contemplative practices' and 'mindfulness practices' will be used interchangeably as the practices (e.g. ikebana, tai chi ch'uan, mindful walking, yoga, observation of nature, observation of the breath, silent sitting) are shared. Good and Yeganeh (2006) apply the concept of mindfulness to organisations as a state in which an individual is: 1) aware and accepting of changes in momentary experiences based on present-centred awareness; 2) aware of and flexible with cognitive patterns/categories; and 3) in control of attention in the moment to scan for new information – resulting in more available resources for a wider variety of cognitions and behaviours. Mindfulness is both a state, and a process. It is not uncommon to hear of organisational processes, policies and practices adopted which have unintended (mindless) negative consequences on students and staff experience (Haroun and Howard-Kemp, 2012).

Some of the literature (cf. Shapiro *et al.,* 2008) uses the term 'meditation' or 'mindfulness meditation' rather than 'contemplation'. However, it is not a term used in this article (unless as part of a quotation or paraphrase), as it has an overtly religious connotation for some which could create a barrier to its being used by those of specific faiths or none.

Brief overview of some benefits of contemplative practices

According to the Centre for Contemplative Mind in Society (www.contemplativemind.org/practices/), contemplative practices can:

- facilitate the development of deep concentration and insight
- help develop the 'observer' faculty, enabling one to step back, gain distance, question and reflect

- sharpen focus, concentration and insight
- manage stress and its impact on the body/mind
- generate a sense of calm and wellbeing
- provide space and relief from stressful and distracting thoughts.

David Kahane (2011) discusses how he came to explore and clarify what 'presence' in teaching meant for him. He shares his experience of moving from a 'pedagogy of lack' in an environment in which leading a large module with a multiple team meant covering gaps and inadequacies, to an approach in which the team were deliberately being themselves facilitators of learning from a 'place of curiosity and unknowing' staying with the present-moment experience. The approach shifted the experience for tutors and students, with the module moving from a course that was poorly perceived to one which became award-winning. When he later started to learn basic contemplative practice, he found 'there was a connection between this mindfulness practice and many of the things I had been seeking in my teaching: an ability to be present to the nuances of the classroom in each moment, a sense of fundamental adequacy rather than lack, an open non-judgemental curiosity about my own experience, and skilled ways of supporting others in this kind of learning' (Kahane, 2011, p. 20). For Kahane, 'a meditative orientation allows me to recognise the powerful energies underlying ''anxiety'' and to channel these into my teaching' (p. 22). In addition to this, Palmer (2009) asserts that 'contemplative time supports becoming self-aware, slowing down and making choices that are life-giving and soul-nourishing' (p. 249) – effects that could benefit not only the practitioner but all those in their community, whether social or academic. For a full overview of research findings regarding the benefits of meditation, see Shapiro *et al.* (2008).

Michael Wesch is best known for his video 'A Vision of Students Today' which went viral, but his approach (Wesch, 2011, p. 24) is one of, 'loving your audience' which he describes as 'a simple shift of focus from yourself and your performance to your students and their learning', and whilst he concedes that 'this may seem like a minor shift, putting these ideas into practice has slowly and completely transformed my teaching. It has changed what I teach, how I teach, and even why I teach. It has me asking what, how and why in new ways, and asking other questions I would never have considered as well'. He goes on to describe how this approach led him to organise his teaching differently, to move students away from a culture of dependency to one of respect and guiding a community of learners to connect and communicate with 'the other person in his [sic] own terms' (Wesch, 2011, p. 27).

There are synergies between Kahane and Wesch's chapters and Robin Youngson's book, *Time to Care: How to love your patients and your job*. In it he describes an environment in which many members of the workforce are stressed, fatigued and under pressure to do more with less time. He sets out the case for treating the whole person backed up with wide-ranging scientific evidence. He acknowledges 'the links between psychological, emotional and physical health; the neuroscience of interpersonal connection and how profoundly we influence one-another' (Youngson, 2012, p. 11).

The themes of connecting and engaging individuals with each other resonate with the literature on student belonging in the classroom, that is, 'the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others in the social environment' (Goodenow, 1993, p. 80). A sense of belonging has been linked to wellbeing (Baumeister and Leary, 1995) and is 'one of the most important needs of all students to function well in learning environments' (Cashmore *et al.,* 2012, p. 12). Tobin Hart (2004) summarises a range of research into the impact of contemplation on learning and behaviour in the classroom. There are also many examples in the USA of contemplative practices being used in higher education such as in the Art Appreciation course offered at Amhurst College by Arthur Zajonc and Joel Upton (Zajonc, 2009).

A contemplative curriculum – the possibilities

At the University of Westminster we have mindfulness projects and activities at different levels. We have a university-wide Change Academy Project supported by the HEA entitled 'Developing a mindful organisation – Being and becoming the institution we desire to be' (Haroun and Howard-Kemp, 2012). The aim of this project is to utilise the principles, and practice, of mindfulness to embed the ethos and values of the University's institutional strategic goals and vision by creating coherence between intention and action. There are modules in development in mindfulness and professional practice as well as initiatives such as meditation sessions offered by Student Services aimed at helping students to cope with revision and examination stresses. There is also a growing group of staff who are interested in mindfulness and developing classroom practices to support a contemplative and creative curriculum.

Our SEDA workshop

The labyrinth

The labyrinth is a tool that can provide contemplative time. Unlike a maze, which has multiple pathways and the potential to lose oneself, the labyrinth has a single path leading to and from the centre. This releases the person walking from all decisions about direction and path and, as a result, has the potential to facilitate focused rather than scattered attention.

The workshop

Jeff and Kimberly Saward have been researching and designing labyrinths for many decades and facilitated the workshop. Jeff began by putting the labyrinth in its historical and cultural context. The basic labyrinth design has been dated to around 2500BC, found on prehistoric petroglyph on a river bank in Goa (Saward, 2003). He showed how this basic design has appeared around the world and how it has developed into intricate patterns of great beauty, each with its single path to the centre. He then showed how these apparently complex labyrinths with their many circuits start from a simple 'seed pattern'. For the classical

Making a tape labyrinth

labyrinth design the seed pattern consists of an equal-armed cross, four brackets and four dots (Hancock, 2011). The points of the seed pattern are simply joined together to create a seven-circuit labyrinth. Armed with knowledge of this technique, participants at the workshop were able to move from a position of never having drawn a labyrinth to creating their own elaborate labyrinth designs using beads, fabrics, felts, pasta shapes, string and pens. These were table-top designs that might be used as finger labyrinths. Jeff then illustrated how easy it is to construct a temporary classical labyrinth for walking using a variety of materials including bird seed, plastic cups, paint, candles and other readily available resources. He proceeded to mark out two temporary labyrinths on the workshop floor, one with rope and the second with masking tape. Each took about 20 minutes to construct. Participants, who wanted to, then had time to walk the labyrinth on their own or as part of a group.

The participants

There were 15 participants who were either currently working in Higher Education or who had done so until recently. Roles included that of counsellor, dyslexia support advisor, librarian, lecturer and freelance consultant.

After the session we wrote to the participants and asked them: What sorts of ideas do you have for using the labyrinth?

Below is a selection of responses that demonstrate a range of opportunities arising from one experience of walking the labyrinth:

- *an experiential activity to help students with both personal and academic reflection*
- *constructive doodling; self-esteem building – success of drawing one*
- *stress reduction; reflection generally; balancing emotions; ability to study*
- *using with counselling clients in parallel with their counselling sessions; teaching and learning as a reflective tool*
- *creating a contemplation area for relaxation at the University*
- *raising awareness of pacing of self in context of e.g. time management, Personal Development Planning, study/revision, lesson planning, problem solving and creative thinking activities*
- *in group project work, e.g. when groups want to make a group decision such as agreeing on or allocating roles, deciding on a course of action, agreeing on a solution, or troubleshooting a problem that has arisen (that might very well be due to group dynamics). Before people make a decision, they take time out, stop talking and walk a labyrinth, or those who want to do so do (others could take time out instead provided they respect the silence)*
- *in problem-based learning (PBL), where there is a heavy emphasis on group work and group decision making. Build in a walk at key points in the PBL process. There's plenty of evidence that in group discussions the quality of thinking and decision making can often be improved by participants agreeing to observe a deliberate pause after a contribution before continuing. A labyrinth could work on the same principle of building in a structured time for reflection*
- *as an alternative way of experiencing mindful walking. This would take place within the context of an MA in Global Management. I will also discuss the concept of the labyrinth with our Disability Officer*
- *contemplation, reflective practice; calming – students and staff; explore roles e.g. boundaries; exploring theoretical concepts in an embodied way*
- *reflective practice – explore how we can use the labyrinth in this context; mindfulness – incorporate into workshops as a tool; will also consider using it within my own practice as a psychotherapist*
- *having a permanent one on campus for stressed staff and students to walk; or a temporary one for special occasions e.g. at annual Teaching and Learning Symposium*
- *produce one in my garden; show friends how to construct one; explore a labyrinth/combine with walking meditation*
- *within Leadership/Management – tying in to a broad movement that is concerned with 'emergence' in leadership. Labyrinth walking would be one activity that encourages 'contemplation', 'mindfulness' – giving time and space for 'emergent' processes*
- *supporting students – something about goal setting, managing time and anxiety*

- *I was struck by the idea of using the drawing of labyrinths to calm the mind and also to tap into creative minds of the students*
- *I was also interested in using the labyrinth to explore concepts related to relationships in a body-centred way. For example, what is your response in walking the labyrinth when someone is in your way? Do you always yield? Do you get frustrated? Etc.*
- *I think this experiential exploration links well to reflective practice in exploring ideas in a physical way*
- *Reflective time as part of dissertation planning, holding questions*
- *As a group bonding process prior to peer working*
- *Bringing quietness, stillness, beauty, time for reflection and restoration into many different work and study contexts.*

Conclusion

A labyrinth is but one approach to bringing mindful practices to students and staff in higher education. Not all will be disposed to these forms of practices and there may be (initial) resistance. Some who have walked the labyrinth have reported that 'it didn't do much for me' or that it was 'disorientating'. This evidences the fact that there are individual differences and that no one activity will produce the same felt effects for all. However, many experience the process positively. At their heart, mindful practices are ways to 'support important affective and interpersonal capacities that foster psychological well-being and the development of the "whole person"' (Shapiro *et al.,* 2008, p. 4) and are also traditionally valued academic skills.

We would be very interested to explore these ideas further with colleagues in other institutions and across disciplinary contexts, both with educators and with staff who work to support the student experience in different capacities. It would be instructive to engage in research to discover how the implementation of such practices affect staff and students – whether in terms of wellbeing or in terms of enhanced learning.

It would also be instructive to learn if mindfulness practices can:

- lead to greater empathy
- affect teachers'/students' perceptions of their effectiveness in the classroom (whether via enhanced relationships/enthusiasm/greater calm (lack of overwhelm)
- aid the development of equanimity and resilience
- support staff and students' wellbeing at times of stress and uncertainty.

Consequently, we have plans for a follow-up SEDA workshop on Contemplative Practices and Pedagogies in Spring 2013. We would love to hear from anyone who has similar interests or who would like to be kept abreast of our workshop plans.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the input and support of the wider team who submitted the bid to SEDA for the workshop event reported here: Digby Warren and David Griffiths, London Metropolitan University; Debbie Holley, Anglia Ruskin University; and Dr Jan Sellers, Independent Consultant.

References

Baumeister, R. F. and Leary, M. R. (1995) 'The need to belong', *Psychological Bulletin,* 117(3).

Bolton, G. (2010) *Reflective Practice,* Sage.

Cashmore, A., Scott, J. and Cane, C. (2012) 'Belonging and intimacy factors in the retention of students', HEA (http://tinyurl.com/9ap3kkm).

Good, D. J. and Yeganeh, B. (2006) 'Mindfulness in moments of monotony', Academy of Management Annual Meeting, 2006.

Goodenow, C. (1993) 'Classroom belonging among early adolescent students: relationships to motivation and achievement', *Journal of Early Adolescence,* 13, pp. 21-43.

Hancock, G. D. (2011) *108 Ways to Use Labyrinths in Schools,* New York: Hancock and Associates.

Haroun, J. and Howard-Kemp, N. (2012) *Developing a Mindful Organisation,* Westminster Change Academy, University of Westminster, UK.

Hart, T. (2004) 'Opening the contemplative mind in the classroom', *Journal of Transformative Education,* 2(1), pp. 28-46.

Kabat-Zin, J. (2006) 'Mindfulness-based interventions in context', *Clinical Psychology: science and practice,* 10, pp. 144-156.

Kahane, D. (2011) 'Mindfulness and presence in teaching and learning', in Hay, I. (ed.) *Inspiring Academics: learning with the world's great university teachers,* McGraw-Hill.

Langer, E. J. (1993) 'A mindful education', *Educational Psychologist,* 28(1), pp. 43-50.

Langer, E. J. (1997) *The Power of Mindful Learning,* Addison-Wesley/Addison Wesley Longman.

Langer, E. J. (2000) 'Mindful learning', *Current Directions in Psychological Science,* 9(6), pp. 220-223.

Palmer, P. (2009) *A Hidden Wholeness: the journey towards an undivided life,* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Palmer, P. and Zajonc, A. (2010) *The Heart of Higher Education,* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Saward, J. (2003) *Labyrinths and Mazes*, London: Gaia Books.

Sellers, J. (2009) 'Exploring the labyrinth', SEDA: *Educational Developments,* 10, January 2009.

Shapiro, S. L., Brown, K. W., Astin, J. A. (2008) *Towards the Integration of Meditation into Higher Education: A review of research*.

Smith, M. K. (2005) Parker J. Palmer: community, knowing and spirituality in education Encyclopedia of Informal Education (www.infed.org/thinkers/palmer.htm.

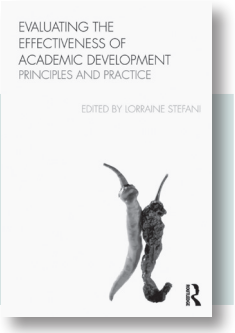
Wesch, M. (2011) 'The art of loving and learning: Erich Fromm and the learning (of) transformation', in Hay, I. (ed.) *Inspiring Academics: learning with the world's great university teachers,* McGraw-Hill.

Youngson, R. (2012) *Time to Care: how to love your patients and your job,* Rebelheart Publishers, New Zealand.

Zajonc, A. (2009) *Meditation as Contemplative Enquiry,* Great Barrington, Massachusetts: Lindisfarne Books.

Jennifer Bright (j.a.bright@westminster.ac.uk) is a Senior Lecturer, and **Helen Pokorny** (h.pokorny@westminster.ac.uk) is a Principal Lecturer, at Westminster Exchange, University of Westminster.

Book Review



Evaluating the Effectiveness of Academic Development, Principles and Practices

Stefani, L. (ed.) 2011

As this edited volume suggests, academic developers' *raison d'être* is transformation through education in both organisational and practice contexts – a process which is long in the making, involves shifting cultures and mind-sets and presents challenges for those who seek to measure effectiveness in simplistic ways. The climate in which academic developers operate is one characterised by reduced government spending with an attendant increase in calls for accountability and evidence of the wider impact of academic development on the student learning experience. At the same time, as learning and teaching assumes a new status with the widespread designation of dedicated senior positions within institutional organisational structures, academic developers often find themselves assuming a lesser role in developing and refining policies, technological systems and processes and a more significant role as merely 'implementers' of change.

The discourse of quality assurance and continuous enhancement and mounting pressure for greater strategic alignment present challenges to the 'values base' of academic development work and the traditional advocacy and partnership model which has informed day-to-day practice. Coupled with the emerging discourse of impact evaluation, this climate has tended towards the measurement of inputs designed to create a good impression, focused on the high points of practice, identified through analysis of 'happy sheets' which provide evaluative feedback on the many separate and seemingly fragmented activities of academic developers.

In exploring theoretical perspectives, whilst providing practical examples which highlight the importance, challenges and complexity of evaluation, this edited collection reminds us that, firstly, what constitutes 'effectiveness' can change overnight when a new regime wants different kinds of evidence and, secondly, a key task facing academic developers is nurturing a nuanced understanding of the politics and practices of evaluation in order to adapt to changing institutional expectations. Essentially, the book prompts the academic development community to challenge the boundaries of current thinking about how and why we evaluate the effectiveness of our endeavours and to consider the development of evaluative frameworks which capture dissenting voices and contradictory data reflecting the messy reality of academic practice in the twenty-first century.

Collectively the contributions articulate a number of important principles including, for example:

- Stepping back from our day-to-day activities to consider the nature of academic practice and higher learning in the context of some quite novel concepts like 'phronesis' and 'authenticity', in order to define the purpose and focus on the processes of academic development which are underpinned by reflection and dialogue, making a difference to not only individuals, but communities and institutions too
- Limit the current emphasis on inputs (cost, numbers, participant responses) in favour of a research-informed and evidence-based approach to evaluation which acknowledges the social and cultural dimensions of academic development, draws on rigorous data, collected from multiple sources and disparate stakeholder groups, analysed in such a way as to appeal to a wide variety of audiences, to encourage staff engagement, to build capacity and trust and to initiate local discussions
- Acknowledge that the language of evaluation is as important as evaluation itself and academic development can assume a wide range of orientations shaped by personal values, experiences, traditions and missions. Therefore, history and context are important considerations in any attempt to evaluate the effectiveness and strategic fit of academic development work.

A particularly tantalising message for me was in relation to how we encourage our institutions to avoid the current rather simplistic, knee-jerk reactions to evaluative feedback from our students in the form of, for example, the National Student Survey. In challenging the current emphasis on academic development work which focuses on 'techniques' designed to improve scores, a convincing argument is mounted for analysing this rich data in a rigorous way, interpreting data sets in a broad context alongside other data sources, the outcome of which can shape academic priorities and approaches and reinforce an evidence-based approach to evaluation.

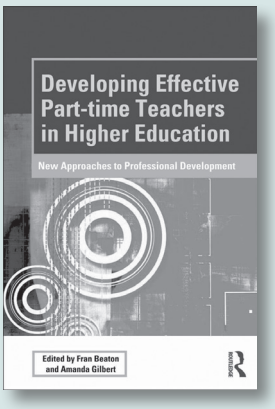
This edited collection recognises that establishing cause and effect in the complex situations with unexpected outcomes or 'ripple effects' which characterise academic development work is not easy, and some of the eight case studies attest to this in tending towards the traditional approach and methods of collecting evaluative feedback. Nonetheless, limitations of the traditional in the current climate are discussed and some quite novel and imaginative methods and approaches emerge including for example, 'longitudinal archiving' and the 'good evaluation method'(GEM) rubric, which highlight the importance of knowing what evaluation is trying to do, and that it is ethical in its practice and fit for purpose.

All of the eight case studies of evaluation practice are drawn from a centre for academic practice based in a large, research-intensive university in New Zealand. On

the face of it this might limit their generalisability particularly since – as the editor herself acknowledges – different types of institutions will encourage different types of academic development work and a different service-mix. This limitation is, however, offset by the wide range of activities considered, including early career development programmes, doctoral skills programmes, research supervisor training, departmental strategic development, e-learning, peer mentoring, *etc.* These local case studies are also complemented by chapters in the third section of the book which consider evaluation of large-scale national projects and show how these can very usefully inform local institutional endeavours.

All in all this book is timely and has appeal to a wide audience seeking to develop new evaluative strategies and protocols which will evidence the real contribution that academic development makes to enhancing the student learning experience and to organisational development and transformation.

Viv Caruana is Reader in Internationalisation of HE at Leeds Metropolitan University (V.caruana@leedsmet.ac.uk).



Developing Effective Part-time Teachers in Higher Education – New Approaches to Professional Development

Edited by Fran Beaton and Amanda Gilbert

Published 5 October 2012 by Routledge – 232 pages

Paperback: 978-0-415-51707-2: £24.99

The latest book in the SEDA Series

Part-time teachers have become an increasing part of the workforce in universities throughout the world. They work in a sector undergoing enormous change and debate about the purposes of the university for individuals, societies and economies. As part-time employees, however, they are not necessarily offered the same level of support or recognition as full-time lecturers. This book, drawing on the voices of part-time teachers and the expertise of those who support them, considers whole-institution strategies to promote individual and collective professional development.

Utilising real action research undertaken by expert practitioners from Australia, New Zealand and the UK, this book explains:

- What motivates part-time teachers
- Developing effective policy and practice to support part-time teachers
- What part-time teachers' voices tell us about the content and delivery of induction programmes and ongoing support
- The implications of change and future directions of Higher Education and part-time educators
- How to build sustainable frameworks for the professional development of part-time staff.

Developing Effective Part-time Teachers in Higher Education explores the extent to which part-time staff are utilised, the effectiveness of their teaching, their integration into the broader teaching environment, and their training and development. This international text will prove an invaluable source for anyone involved in academic and educational staff development in Higher or Further Education, and is essential reading for Human Resources directors and managers, senior academics and all part-time teachers.

... SEDA News continued from page 28

2013 Conference and Symposium

The 2013 SEDA Spring Conference from 17th -18th May 2012, at the Marriott Hotel in Leeds, will provide the central focus for the SEDA@20 activities. The conference will focus around the theme of Values and will take a slightly different format from previous conferences, whilst still providing an opportunity for delegates to present papers and research. A symposium is integrated into the second day of the conference, but will also be available for delegates to book separately if they so wish. The second day will conclude with a sparkling Gala Evening.

Gala Evening

The SEDA@20 Gala Evening celebration will be held at the Leeds Marriott Hotel on Saturday 18th May. This will be an opportunity to get out your DJs and posh frocks and celebrate in style! The evening includes a dinner, the presentation of the SEDA Legacy Awards and entertainment. Tickets for the gala evening can be bought as part of the conference package or bought separately. Details will be on the SEDA website.

Information about the full programme of SEDA@20 activities and events can be found on the SEDA website. Please check the website regularly to ensure you secure your place!

Liz Shrives
SEDA@20 Coordinator

SEDA News

The Editorial of the *New Academic Magazine* in June 1993, written by the then Editor, Danny Saunders, ran the headline statement:

> *'On May 19th 1993 the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) rose like the phoenix from the ashes of the Standing Conference on Educational Development (SCED) and the Staff Development Group of the Society for Research in Higher Education (SRHE/SDG). The two organisations originated in the old Polytechnic and University sectors, so their merger is good sense now that one of the many binary lines in education has been rubbed out.'*

2013 is therefore a landmark year in which SEDA will celebrate its 20th birthday as an Association. As with all birthday celebrations it provides an opportunity for us to express appreciation and celebrate the past and everything that we have achieved. Whilst some individuals will vividly remember the struggle to make an impact, sometimes against all the odds, it is fitting to take time to reflect on the step changes SEDA has made over time. At the forefront of this are examples of how the SEDA principles and values are now embedded within learning and teaching in higher education through our lobbying and advocacy over the years. Many in higher education will not know that this legacy originates within the Association.

The birthday celebration also provides a timely opportunity to explore how the strengths and attributes of SEDA as a community can shape new agenda and meet challenges in contemporary higher education.

We look forward to offering a range of activities and events throughout the year to celebrate the impact of what SEDA has achieved during the last 20 years. We aim to raise sector-wide understanding of what SEDA is and the role it takes in UK and international HE. We will acknowledge and thank SEDA members for their contribution and develop further cooperation with other development communities and organisations.

In 1993, Danny Saunders identified several audiences who might relate to the aspirations and work of SEDA:

- lecturers, staff and educational developers who encourage and support change
- senior managers involved in critical decision making about allocating resources for the support of learning and teaching in Higher Education.

Twenty years on we are at a crossroads where role definitions are becoming increasingly complex and distorted, with very few now able to distance themselves from the responsibility of enhancing the student learning experience. The role SEDA has to play is fundamentally unchanged, but how we fulfil that task, moving into the next 20 years, is our greatest challenge.

Join us in celebration of how we met that challenge 20 years ago and in determining how we meet the challenge of journeying into the next 20 years!

SEDA Legacy Awards and Research Grants

The individual and team awards will recognise and celebrate achievement in educational and staff development. At the same time we are inviting applications for research grants of up to £9,000 for projects that will create an impact in UK Higher Education.

Both the Legacy Awards and the Research Grants will help celebrate and raise awareness of the Association's distinctive contribution to educational development in UK Higher Education. These were launched at the November conference and are open for applications until 31st January 2013. Full details can be found on the SEDA website.

Celebratory Lecture and Reception

A Celebratory Lecture and Reception will be held at the House of Commons, Palace of Westminster, London on Wednesday 16th January 2013. Professor Janet Beer will chair an invited keynote lecture by Professor Graham Gibbs titled 'Learning at the Heart of the System'. Graham is a founding member of SEDA and ICED (the International Consortium for Educational Development), a former SEDA Chair and is recognised for his outstanding contribution to SEDA, with a place on the SEDA Roll of Honour.

SEDA News continues on page 27 ...