

# EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

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



Issue 15.1

March 2014 ISSN 1469-3267

£9.50 Cover price (UK only)

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### SEDA

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

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

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## Creative Campus: Using creativity in educational development

Louise Naylor and Jan Sellers, University of Kent

As educational developers, promoting creativity and innovation have long been viewed as a key part of our role. It proved to be a popular theme for the 18th Annual SEDA Conference in Bristol. In this article, we share the background, context and stories that have shaped our *Creative Campus* initiative at Kent ([www.kent.ac.uk/creativecampus/](http://www.kent.ac.uk/creativecampus/)). Launched in 2008, armed only with a vision and limited resources, this initiative has produced transformational change at all levels within the University by providing new opportunities for student and staff development. *Creative Campus* has become a source of energy and ideas by bringing fresh perspectives on implementing change at Kent. With its emphasis on developing people and places, through promoting new partnerships and targeting resources, creative initiatives have been delivered that add quality and educational value.

### Creative Campus

Inspired by work and building on the concept of the 'Creative Campus' at the University of Alabama, Kent's *Creative Campus* began with a successful bid to the HEA Change Academy. Starting with limited resources, collaborations have thrived through 'unlikely partnerships' across academic disciplines (Coon and Donovan, 2007), with professional services and external practitioners delivering a wide variety of arts, cultural and environmental activities that have enriched the cultural landscape. Led by educational developers in the Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (UFLT), the project has involved partnerships between a diverse team of staff and students including the Director of Estates, Head of the School of Arts, Director of the Gulbenkian Theatre, a Students' Union officer and other academic colleagues. Following our four-day retreat to share ideas, we returned with the following vision: *to celebrate, foster and embed creativity across the University's campuses, raising the profile of Kent as a creative place to study, work, play and visit.*

The Creative Campus was taken forward at all levels within the University, from practical projects to the embedding of creativity in the curriculum (Jackson *et al.*, 2006) and University policy and strategy (Tepper, 2004). Students have engaged through the curriculum or internships to create novel learning and social spaces on campus, and gained new practical as well as academic skills. This includes fully realised architectural projects; outdoor teaching and learning spaces such as the Canterbury Labyrinth, woodland classrooms and trails; and student publications ranging from bus posters to arts catalogues. In turn, projects have attracted attention and funding from internal and external stakeholders and have supported the professional development of staff and promoted wider community engagement.

**SEDA Supporting and Leading Educational Change**

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## 2014 (Vol.15)

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Individual subscriptions are £38 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 £270 sterling.

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

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

The Creative Campus concept was developed in universities in the USA to make campus-based Arts activities central to academic life by encouraging collaborations between staff, students and the local community (Tepper, 2004). At Kent, our approach and scope have been distinctive from the outset, promoting interdisciplinary and inter-team collaboration through existing budget frameworks to support learning and teaching, extra-curricular and community projects that go beyond the Arts. Initially drawing on Teaching Quality Enhancement (HEFCE) and National Teaching Fellowship (Jan Sellers) funds, the construction of Canterbury Labyrinth was Kent's first, iconic *Creative Campus* project: a teaching and learning resource, a work of art and a performance space. Since then, Kent's *Creative Campus* has acted as a catalyst for new creative projects that support learning and teaching, the arts and the development of the campus environment – successfully delivering over 75 projects and engaging over 2000 staff, students and members of the local community over the past five years.

Key to our success was the highly participatory and inclusive approach taken to engage stakeholders – running a series of World Café style events to gather creative ideas, shape projects and inform plans contributed by all levels of staff and students. Encouraged to write or draw ideas on tablecloths, participants were able to share their thoughts and views in a collaborative, yet informal and anonymous way, to start to shape the vision. The enthusiasm and energy generated from these initial consultations yielded over 276 project ideas over five broad themes (Table 1). This participatory approach has been refined over the years to provide new curriculum-based innovation projects, for example in assessments, through 'love/hate' consultations that inform the development of social spaces (Bride *et al.*, 2013), and photographic, poetry and short story competitions that result in exhibitions and publications that provide opportunities for student volunteering and internships.

THEME	PROJECTS
Learning and Teaching	New modules ( <i>Guiding and Interpreting</i> and <i>Creative Conservation</i> ) plus creation of novel outdoor learning (Archaeological digs/surveys, Forensic laboratory) and teaching spaces ( <i>Quercus genius</i> from a fallen oak tree)
Arts	Student-led (u/g, p/g) competitions, publications and internships, that can be highlighted in 'On the Buses' poster series or exhibitions. New interdisciplinary Sci-Art projects and exhibitions (Chain Reaction)
Estates	Student recycling campaigns ( <i>'Don't bin it'</i> ); Social Hubs research by anthropology and architecture students, resulting in wide-ranging improvements to informal learning and social spaces around campus ( <i>Case study 1</i> ).
Environment	Environmental management: enhanced nature trail, pond management, coppicing, sustainable woodlands, plus development of the campus kitchen garden and wild flower meadow ( <i>Case study 2</i> ).
Community	Publication of stories and poems 'Tales from the Dockyard' (collaboration between <i>Kent Messenger</i> and School of Journalism) to developing outdoor spaces using artefacts from the Historic Dockyard, Chatham; work with Canterbury and Medway Fuse Festivals, school liaison, Pilgrim's Hospice and Canterbury Archaeological Trust and other Universities ( <i>Case study 3</i> ).

Table 1 Themes and projects

In some cases, Creative Campus has sought to recognise creativity in the moment by working with existing arts performances or exhibitions, or by supporting projects that enhance the curriculum (e.g. Creative Writing, Photography, Biosciences). Some other projects are more long-lived, sustainable or legacy projects that improve the campus environment over time and range from recycling projects to improving learning and social spaces, to promoting the development of sculpture

and art work on campus. In order to use Creative Campus as a catalyst for change, projects have had to be prioritised according to their delivery (short, medium and long term projects) and the level of resource available (human, physical and financial). This has involved engaging key stakeholders (staff, students, Estates, or other professional services) and redirecting existing resources (such as the Improvement of Social Spaces Fund) towards Creative Campus projects that seek to enhance the overall student (and staff) experience. We have learned that not all projects can be supported or will be successful. Ideas must be shared, considered, evaluated and implemented in a timely way to promote impact, sometimes taking up to 2-3 years to be fully realised.

### Engaging students as partners

Creative Campus has sought to transform the student experience by encouraging staff and students to work together, face to face, to solve problems, improvise and develop new ways of learning that promote active engagement with their studies and full participation in the academic community. As a result, students' creative skills have been enhanced and their confidence and self-esteem boosted:

*'Engaging with Creative Campus has given me the opportunity to enhance my creative skills and given me greater confidence in my abilities. It has allowed me to explore ideas within a supportive environment, offering guidance and putting me in touch with people who have helped me realise creative projects within the University.'*  
(Sara Tilley, graduate intern, Architecture)

### Case study 1 – Curriculum to business concept

Tutors on the Masters in Architecture degree (MArch, 4th year cohort) responded to a Creative Campus competition to redesign a social space in the Marlowe building by embedding this work within their *Urban Landscapes* module. Following initial feedback on ideas presented by 17 students, the students worked in two teams to develop the best designs and one student worked as an intern with MELD Architecture to bring the designs to life. Working with Estates, the Marlowe Foyer (see <http://tinyurl.com/nbgcfwv>) was completed in May 2010 and was shortlisted as a 'Small Budget; Big Impact' initiative that was showcased at the Higher Education Design Quality Forum, sponsored by RIBA, in April 2011. The success of this project and the emerging talent of two MArch students were recognised through the University's Graduate Internship Scheme, which led to the formation of a start-up design business. This in turn supported several other Creative Campus projects including the development of Medway social spaces, On the Buses posters and exhibitions.

*'Creative Campus has supported both my development and recognised my ambitions as a young designer; encouraging me to collaborate on projects that produce fresh ideas, that very often progress to reality such as the Marlowe Foyer refurbishment. Its impact locally and contribution to the wider campus has been publicly recognised with a RIBA award.'*  
(Pier del Renzio, graduate intern, MELD)

### Promoting experiential learning

*'Interdisciplinarity is the bridge between the academic and the real world, the means by which our students can be empowered to use the disciplines to address the complex world in which they live.'* (Newell, 2007)

In May 2010, the University offered a one-day seminar, 'Campus as Classroom', as a partner in the Creativity in Professional Practice Research Network led by the Cass Business School. Over 40 people attended from a wide range of HEIs. The event explored the possibilities and challenges of using the campus itself as a medium to explore and initiate new approaches to teaching, including a woodland Forensic Science 'classroom'; a teaching space, seating up to 18, with seats carved from a fallen oak tree; the Canterbury Labyrinth as a learning and teaching resource; and the Nature Trail, where students are training as guides and producing resource materials (Bride *et al.*, 2013).

### Case study 2 – Campus as classroom

Using a former allotment site, the campus kitchen garden was the initiative of Dr Ian Bride in conjunction with Kent Union, to promote experiential learning in student and staff volunteers. Working with a carpentry apprentice from Estates, the students refurbished a semi-derelict store building (which became known as the 'Plotting Shed') and learned how to plant and grow seeds by helping to plumb in a supply of running water with the Head of Grounds. Participants shared the fruits of their labour and their wellbeing was boosted through physical exercise and the pleasure of work outdoors. In addition, both staff and students have trained as beekeepers, with some students showcasing the beehives or their developing woodwork skills on campus as part of their *Guiding and Interpreting* module.

*'I think it is important that students feel part of the campus landscape and can leave their mark.'*  
(Jules Roberti-di-Winghe, 2nd year conservation student)



Student-led nature walk

## Supporting creative professional development

Creative Campus has been used to develop individuals as well as teams of staff and students at the University and beyond. For example, Dr. Bride used his teaching support prize to take a course in sustainable woodland management and to support his Visiting Fellowship at the Australian National University (ANU), where his creative thinking and practice on using the campus as a learning environment was recognised as ‘leading edge in the sustainable use of landscape as an extension of campus infrastructure’. Similarly, the Canterbury Labyrinth or indoor portable labyrinths have been used to train a team of staff and students as labyrinth facilitators at Kent to support learning and teaching, wellbeing and professional development, as well as outreach to the wider community (Sellers, 2013). Dissemination has included events at higher education conferences (including SEDA’s), diverse professional organisations, festivals and other Universities.

### Case study 3 – Creativity and the Cultural Olympiad

Leading up to the London 2012 Olympic Games, 13 universities in the South East joined forces through the Creative Campus Initiative (CCI) to create a programme of innovative and dynamic cultural events, 15 of which were recognised by the official London 2012 Inspire Mark (Cultural Olympiad). More than 100 special commissions, exhibitions, performances and events were staged, culminating in a one-day conference at Kent. To address creative professional development, two critical debates were staged evaluating (a) the support of Deaf and Disabled Artists and (b) mapping resources for practising artists in the community, based on the outcomes of the artist residency programmes that had been supported by CCI. This concluded with a showcase of artist-led events aimed at sharing resources and also evaluating the impact of the CCI through participatory research surveys. This arts collaboration was voted the Best Creative Cultural Project and shortlisted for the prestigious Coubertin Award at the Podium Awards Ceremony (2012), held to recognise the contribution of higher and further education institutions to the ideals of the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

*‘The take-up from schools and community groups has been astonishing and to reach over half a million people by bringing the arts and sport together is truly inspirational.’* (Bill Morris, Director of Culture, Ceremonies, Education and Live Sites, LOCOG)

### Assessing the impact

As a campus-wide creativity initiative guided by a multi-disciplinary team of staff and students, the Creative Campus has been a force for positive social and cultural change that is at the forefront of such initiatives in the UK. Kent is strongly placed to capitalise on its green campus environment and strong community links in both Canterbury and Medway, with initiatives such as student photo competitions and exhibitions now being run at its Paris centre. To be effective and sustainable, the Creative Campus has become part of the central experience at Kent and is anchored across various activities: through academic programmes, extracurricular volunteering and internships, campus-wide competitions,

exhibitions and grants. However, we believe that the approach is transferable to other institutions if guiding principles are in place (Table 2).

PRINCIPLE	PRACTICE
Work with existing resources	Identify ideas/opportunities that are timely; work with existing ideas/projects that need additional support/resource to succeed
Broker unlikely partnerships	Promote interdisciplinary work between academic and professional service staff and students to increase creativity and impact
Consult widely and actively	Engage with stakeholders at various levels (including senior management) and avoid a committee-based route to change
Promote student (staff) engagement	Link initiatives to enhancing student experience and employability (develop new opportunities within existing curriculum)
Celebrate success	Provide student awards for volunteering or promote staff professional development and recognition through prizes or promotion; disseminate good practice to secure new and ongoing funding

Table 2 Guiding principles

Lingo and Tepper (2010) argue that the Creative Campus concept is ideally suited to HE and 21st-century demands for creative graduates, who need to develop active ways of learning and engagement through working together with staff to solve ‘real world’ problems. In agreement with our observations, they indicate that these projects are most successful when they are student-focused, emergent (based around creative inquiry and problem solving) and systemic (i.e. anchored within the curriculum or accessible around campus).

*‘We believe the 21st century will be the century of the “creative campus” but that there is a need to overcome scepticism and fragmentation with credible theory and rigorous research and assessment.’* (Lingo and Tepper, 2010)

Assessing the impact of the Creative Campus, and the intervention of creativity to promote change *per se*, is difficult to research in a quantifiable way. However, drawing on the experience of others, we have observed impact in three key areas: (a) raising awareness and changing attitudes, (b) enhancing understanding, knowledge and skills and (c) changing practice/policy, with the scale of impact being assessed from individual, organisational to HE sector level (Stoakes, 2013). The story is still unfolding; there are still barriers to be overcome in terms of communication (promoting and sustaining momentum), culture (variable staff and student engagement from different disciplines) and

coordination (with existing institutional priorities, strategies and vision). However, in our position as educational developers, where we broker relationships to connect people and innovate to support changes to pedagogic practice that enhance the student experience, we would argue that we are ideally positioned to drive change using creativity.

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**Dr Louise Naylor** is the Director of the Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (UETL), at the University of Kent ([l.h.naylor@kent.ac.uk](mailto:l.h.naylor@kent.ac.uk)). **Dr Jan Sellers** is retired from UETL and works as an independent labyrinth facilitator ([jansellers.labyrinth@gmail.com](mailto:jansellers.labyrinth@gmail.com)).

# College-based higher education and student research and inquiry: Some challenges and opportunities for educational developers

**Mick Healey**, HE Consultant, **Alan Jenkins**, Oxford Brookes University and **John Lea**, Canterbury Christ Church University

*'The Quality Code notes that "Scholarship and research lie at the heart of higher education", while acknowledging that the precise nature of these scholarly activities is determined by subject differences as well as by differences in focus, level, scope and provider context.'* (QAA, 2013, p. 4)

*'Based on the results presented in this paper alone, increasing research active teaching staff in lower RAE contexts is unlikely to affect learning. However [the research results]...do suggest that action could be taken, not between different types of research context but within each context, to help more students experience the benefits of research-stimulated teaching environments.'* (Dunbar-Goddett and Trigwell, 2007, p. 188, emphasis added)

*'Scholarly activity, rather than research, is undertaken and is predicated on enhancing the classroom experience as opposed to creating new knowledge. Staff teaching HE in FE are proud of their professional status and consider that their success in the classroom owes much to this training. However, several of our free responses suggest that the lack of time for anything other than professional updating is clearly still a topic of some debate.'* (King and Widdowson, 2012, p. 13)

*'Academic/educational/faculty developers have a pivotal role to play in supporting the development of understanding and practice in relation to undergraduate research and inquiry.'* (Brew and Jewell, 2012, p. 48)

## Introduction – Staff vs. student scholarly activity

Internationally, much 'higher education' is delivered outside the university sector(s). In the last few years in the UK the Association of Colleges estimates that around 10% of HE work – some 100,000 students – has been consistently delivered in what is now generally called College Based Higher Education (CBHE) or College Higher Education (CHE). In the USA, it is estimated that nearly half the country's undergraduates (around 12 million students) are studying in community colleges, and around 25% of those will subsequently transfer to four-year schools (McCook, 2011). The central questions this article seeks to address are: how can we best ensure that what these students experience is *higher* education and then how can educational developers support these institutions, staff and students in this agenda?

We have recently completed a project commissioned by the Higher Education Academy on developing research-based curricula in college-based higher education (Healey et al., 2014). In the resultant report we argued that:

*'Whilst recognising the importance of the skills agenda for CBHE, we should not allow it to undermine the essence of what the word "higher" means in higher education. Some key characteristics of which are that students need to be increasingly made aware of the contested nature of knowledge; the conditions under which knowledge is discovered and manufactured; and in general that higher education is as much concerned with what is not known, as what is known.'* (Healey et al., 2014, p. 16)

In the UK, there is a growing body of literature to support the claim that CBHE staff are increasingly becoming involved in the types of scholarly activities which can foster the conditions to nurture these forms of higher learning (e.g. King and Widdowson, 2009; Lea and Simmons, 2012; Turner and Carpenter, 2012), but the main focus of these discussions has been on the qualifications, experience and continuing professional development of the staff themselves. In the process, the experiences of students of research-based curricula have been largely ignored, despite the call of Healey and Jenkins (2009, p. 3) that *'all undergraduate students in all higher education institutions should experience learning through, and about, research and inquiry'*. And, in a further echo of von Humboldt, it might be argued that it is the co-joined scholarly activities of both staff and students which actually lie at the heart of a *higher* learning environment.

Whilst recognising the importance of ensuring those teaching HE in the CBHE sector are indeed 'scholars' in their disciplines, our central concern therefore has been that the focus should be less on supporting the research abilities of *staff* and more on supporting staff to teach in ways

that develop *student* ability to learn through research and inquiry. Or, as Hattie and Marsh concluded from their review of the then research evidence on teaching research relations, *'we need to increase the skills of staff to teach emphasising the construction of knowledge by students'* (Hattie and Marsh, 1996, pp. 533-534, emphasis added).

### Some project findings

To this end, and as part of the Higher Education Academy project, we were encouraged by the number and quality of cases studies (over 50) we were able to compile from all over the world. The publication and the linked web site (<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/college-based-he/research-based-curricula>) contain the case studies – including these two edited UK examples which exemplify our approach.

#### Case study 1: Sitting in the 'hot' seat: Supporting students on foundation degrees to read critically at East Durham College, UK

This initiative began in years one and two of two Foundation Degrees at East Durham College, a college franchise with the University of Sunderland. To help the students make the transition to higher level reading we adapted the approach of Ginnis (2001), where the teacher sits in the 'Hot' seat of the classroom and students interrogate the teacher about their reading and understanding of an academic text.

They now model, on a single occasion, the original strategy of Ginnis and in subsequent weeks reverse the strategy by asking students to seek out, and locate literature of their choice, week by week reducing the level of guidance. In class, they are asked to take the 'Hot' seat. They begin to share their critique of literature, they isolate key themes and dominant ideas, attempt to make sense of what is written and not written explicitly.

Sources: Correspondence with Jan Grinstead and Joan Goss ([joan.goss@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:joan.goss@northumbria.ac.uk)); Ginnis (2001); Goss and Grinstead (2013); Stevenson and O'Keefe (2011)

#### Case study 2: Linking first and second year assessment strategies through researching the need for a local sports development project in a work-based learning module at West Herts College, UK

In the second semester of year one, Foundation Degree in Sport Studies students develop a project proposal focused on researching the need for a local sports development project. Students complete a project proposal form which is then presented to a panel for assessment.

In year two students are encouraged to approach employers with their year one sports development project proposals, to fulfil the requirements of their double semester work-based learning module. Students are required to network with employers to find a niche in the employers' market. Students develop, implement, analyse and reflect on their implemented project proposals and this forms the basis for a 5000-word mini final project.

Source: Correspondence with Charlotte Gale ([Charlotte.Gale@westherts.ac.uk](mailto:Charlotte.Gale@westherts.ac.uk))

What these and many other case studies demonstrate to us is how staff have focused on meeting the needs of students in *this* sector – including that many of them have limited prior awareness of 'research mindedness' and have a strong focus on using the degree to support future employability. Provider context, therefore, far from being an inhibiting factor, we found was better understood as a way of helping to widen our understanding of how students might experience a research-rich curricula.

Indeed, we were encouraged by the closeness of the link between research

and teaching we found in the CBHE sector, supported by other recent findings (King and Widdowson, 2012; Simmons and Lea, 2013), where CBHE staff were becoming vocal in demanding that their scholarly activities link directly with their teaching activities. In this context, it is perhaps not surprising that a lot of CBHE-related literature talks of the usefulness of the work of Boyer to a CBHE context (e.g. King and Widdowson, 2009; Feather, 2012; Lea and Simmons, 2012; Turner and Carpenter, 2012), because of his emphasis on the importance of developing a more rounded, and less hierarchical understanding of scholarship. Put simply, that original research should not be placed on a perch above the other equally important scholarships of application, of integration, and of teaching and learning (SoTL).

Evidence of this can also be found in UK QAA guidance on the achievement of degree-awarding powers, where it advises that staff should provide examples of:

*'...scholarly activity...that informs their teaching and contributes to the development and enhancement of students' understanding of their subject... [and] demonstrating active involvement in the generation or reformulation of academic knowledge and the dissemination of understanding or ideas to both internal and external audiences.'* (QAA, 2013, p. 5, emphasis added)

Couched in this way, it could easily be argued that CBHE is perhaps better placed than many universities – with their emphasis on the scholarship of discovery – not only to generate a more rounded notion of scholarship, but to ensure that these also feature more heavily in the student curriculum. More proactively, it could also be argued that a curriculum led by the research interests of academics may well not be as enriching for students as a curriculum informed by wider notions of research mindedness.

## The educational development context

In our report we list the following strategies for course teams in colleges to introduce year one students into research and knowledge complexity, and we believe that these could be adapted for any higher education context:

- Create a strong opening activity that involves students doing guided research
- Help students to read academic literature critically
- Involve library and other learning support staff
- Demonstrate how research mindedness can support future employability
- Guide students into the nature of research in their discipline(s)
- Provide opportunities for students to make their research public
- Recognise that students will find such work challenging
- Ensure how the students are assessed supports research mindedness
- Involve upper level students in supporting student research in year one.

However, when we turned to strategies and case studies for ensuring structured interventions across departments and institutions – perhaps where educational developers can play central roles – we found few examples from the international college sector. Indeed, we had to exemplify our suggested strategies from the 'mainstream' university sector:

- Celebrate and share what is already in place
- Create opportunities for staff and students to experiment
- Review and enhance what is in place
- Ensure initial training in teaching and subsequent CPD includes an emphasis on supporting student inquiry
- Require and support all programmes to be redesigned
- Reshape the timetable structure
- Create alternative learning spaces.

This seeming absence of structured institutional interventions in the

international college sector may well reflect the governance, funding, and quality assurance of such institutions. But if students and staff in such institutions are to experience higher education, then more structured support is surely needed. In the UK, and perhaps elsewhere, given the heterogeneous nature of the relationships between universities and CBHE providers, ranging from validation to full franchise arrangements, one broad way forward is for college and university leaders to work together to support college staff teaching HE in ways that promote student inquiry, and educational developers working at the HE/FE interface could be important levers in this respect.

## Conclusion

In their article on research-based learning, Brew and Jewell (2012, p. 50) argue that 'academic developers have an important role to play in prompting changes in attitudes and practices'. As they suggest, it is possible that undergraduate students may well have a disjointed experience of scholarship, particularly if only one part of their programme contains a research-rich element. And this might well be exacerbated if academics do little more than pay lip service to undergraduate research, knowing that any co-joined activity with students is unlikely to enhance their own research status. Here, some of the more practical implications of working with wider notions of scholarship may well need to be better embedded, not just into the wider curriculum, but also the committee structure of institutions, for example, working to better unite learning and teaching committees with research committees (Brew and Jewell, 2012).

For those of us in the UK who work in partnerships between FE colleges and universities these dimensions can quickly become multi-layered. For example, whilst it is important that college-based staff are integrated into the university curricula and committees as much as possible, it is equally important to understand that the same college-based staff may already be working with a more

rounded conception of scholarship and that university-based staff may need to be integrated the other way, so to speak. Furthermore, it is important to ensure that the foundation degree components of a curriculum will enable a smooth transition into the honours component, and the rationale behind this may well need a coordinated, cross-institutional approach to ensure that students are able to experience an enriched research experience at each level.

However, perhaps most important of all, are not the practices, but the attitudes. And here educational developers may have a very important role in ensuring that CBHE is not viewed as an inferior learning context – for students who haven't 'made it' to university – but as a context in which wide and enriching notions of scholarship can be nurtured, and one which recognises the equal value of the 'provider contexts' in an increasingly diverse and marketised higher education environment. We hope that the case studies we have provided on the website and in the report, and the accompanying arguments, will provide educational developers with some support in pursuing these, what might seem at times, highly complicated and multi-layered objectives.

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- Mick Healey** is an HE Consultant (<http://www.mickhealey.co.uk/>), **Alan Jenkins** is an Emeritus Professor at Oxford Brookes University, and **John Lea** is Assistant Director Learning and Teaching at Canterbury Christ Church University.

# HE in FE: An MA Education module

**Peter Gossman**, Manchester Metropolitan University, and **Sue Horder** and **John Luker**, Glyndŵr University

This article aims to provide some insights into our University's module 'HE in FE' (accredited by the HEA at Descriptor Level 2). Initially we will discuss the genesis of the module and this will be followed by a brief review of its first iteration.

As a panel member and chair for collaborative partnership programme delivery approvals, I (Peter) was prone to and keen on asking staff at our partner FE colleges about their engagement with the 'HE-ness' of the programme they were proposing – often Foundation Degrees. We have three large FE colleges within our catchment and the responses varied between staff groups and institutions proposing partnerships. The most frequent response was in relation to levels and student study independence. Occasionally, the qualifications teaching staff held or were working towards

were mentioned, often in relation to their scholarship and 'capacity' to teach.

Further communication with the colleges revealed that only one institution was a member of the HEA and within it, at the time, only two staff were Fellows of the academy. In response to this perceived need we developed an MA in Education module entitled 'HE in FE'. Part of the rationale for an M-level offer was to provide 30 credits that could easily be counted within the 180 for a full award. However, this may prove to be naïve thinking as many of the staff who enrolled in the first iteration already held master's qualifications, particularly within their discipline.

For the module we obtained Higher Education Academy United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework



(UKPSF) D2 (Fellow) recognition. The module has a syllabus, scheme of work and four learning outcomes that reflect the areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values of the UKPSF. Its duration is 300 hours with 30 scheduled face to face.

The module is assessed via a portfolio with four tasks each covering several aspects of the UKPSF. For example, task two, 'critically review an HE in FE scheme of work and section of delivered sessions (of over 20 hours teaching) in order to refine the approach to enhance student learning', clearly tackles aspects of areas of activity (e.g. A1 design and plan and A2 teach and/or support learning), core knowledge (e.g. K2 appropriate methods for teaching and K3 how students learn) and professional values (e.g. V3 use evidence-informed approaches). The UKPSF overtly features within the VLE Moodle space and the module handbook.

The entry requirements are as expected for an MA with participants having an honours degree, teaching on a higher education programme of study within an FE context and having a recognised teaching qualification.

The following section details our initial reflections and experiences from the first iteration.

Many in FE do not relish the idea of two intensive days of CPD in the half-term week. Tutors may view their HE colleagues as bringing new techniques in 'egg sucking'. It was therefore reassuring on day two of the course to see that all but one of the cohort returned. An anecdote reported that, on arriving home after day one, an old hand told his wife how much he was enjoying the course – a new experience for her as she was all too familiar with the regular complaints that followed half-term CPD sessions, and the futility of it all.

So why was this experience different? Mainly because it met the actual needs of this diverse group. Half of the group were experienced in delivery of Foundation and Honours degrees and the others were due to start delivery of new HE courses in the coming few months. It was clear that, for all, there were areas of HE that were mysterious. Some HE providers specify the delivery of their courses in FE settings with a very high level of detail. This will include lecture notes, slide presentations and selected reading. Other providers will specify the module outcomes and syllabus outline through a module specification document whilst allowing the FE delivery team to mould the module to the needs of their local learners. It was apparent that insufficient background information was given to FE delivery teams regarding how the learning outcomes for each level of delivery were arrived at. An examination of the QAA subject descriptors quickly solved that mystery. As a result, the class were able to critique the phrasing of module learning outcomes as well as see how the 'levelness' between levels 4, 5 and 6 develop over the full programme.

Writing and assessing outcomes was an aspect of planning, teaching and assessing that all were familiar with. The level

of autonomy in HE was less familiar as some staff were used to teaching to levels 2 and 3 outcomes specified by exam boards. Later discussion on this topic indicated that understanding the difference was liberating. Some present were preparing new modules with just the specification as their key resource. As a result, they felt better able to take control of the design and the delivery of their programmes.

For some novice practitioners, the dark arts of HE assessment can be as confusing to them as it is to their students. This process was demystified through a detailed discussion about learning design, different assessment methods and the amount of independence that their learners should demonstrate at levels 4, 5 and 6. The debate was broadened to include current research into ways in which students learn as well as concepts of autonomy for the learners on HE courses. The benefits of exploring one's own underpinning philosophy of education provoked a lively discussion about teacher-centred and learner-centred paradigms and the reality of the working environment.

In the final section, we consider the key issues of specialist subject pedagogy and threshold concepts.

Whilst many of the participants on the first iteration of the HE in FE module held master's qualifications in their discipline, it was evident that their critical understanding of pedagogies associated with it was to some extent unexplored since most had a teaching qualification in post-compulsory education – a predominately generic qualification. For that reason, the concept of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) and threshold concepts was introduced. PCK was presented as the combination of both content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular aspects of subject matter are organised, adapted, and presented to students, and threshold concepts as the idea that teachers need to make refined decisions about what is fundamental to a grasp of the subject they are teaching when designing new programmes.

The group engaged in further debate and concluded that having knowledge of subject matter and general pedagogical strategies, though necessary, were not sufficient in isolation. The group acknowledged that the ability to transform the manner in which subject content is taught by finding different methods and approaches that make the content accessible to learners is a key factor worth considering when preparing new modules or redesigning existing ones.

At the end of the two days, feedback from the group suggested that they felt more prepared and better equipped to begin designing new HE programmes or review the design of existing ones.

**Peter Gossman** is an Academic Developer at Manchester Metropolitan University, and **Sue Horder** and **John Luker** are Senior Lecturers in the Department of Education, at Glyndŵr University.

# Student as Producer: Curriculum development, institutional change and reinventing 'the idea of university' as a radical political project

**Mike Neary**, University of Lincoln

Student as Producer (SaP) has been the organising principle for teaching and learning at the University of Lincoln since 2010, based on work that has been going on since 2007. SaP now forms the basis for the University's Teaching and Learning Plan 2011-2016. At its core lies the notion that undergraduate students are an important part of the academic culture and intellectual project of the institution. This is acknowledged by a university-wide project to re-engineer the relationship between research and teaching, so that research and research-like activities are the default principle for the design and delivery of all courses at all levels across the entire university. Not all aspects of teaching and learning at Lincoln are based on the principles of research-engaged teaching, nor are all academics at Lincoln expected to agree with the assumptions on which SaP is based, but academics are challenged to consider the implications of SaP for their own teaching and research activities.

Research-engaged teaching forms part of the curriculum in many providers of higher education. The unique aspect of SaP at Lincoln is the way it has become the organising principle for all teaching and learning across the whole university, so offering the possibility for a genuine transformation of the culture of Higher Education institutions, and the 'idea of the university' itself (McLean, 2006). This is an important issue when mainstream higher education in the UK is being forced to consider students as consumers of their educational experience in a marketised model, and when the main criteria for academic excellence in teaching appears to be the extent to which programmes prepare students

for employment, and, in research, the extent to which publications support the British government's neo-liberal economic policy (Holmwood, 2011). It is the possibility of transformational institutional change based on academic collaboration between students and academics that forms the basis of Student as Producer's challenging nature. SaP can be regarded as an act of resistance to the concept of student as consumer and the pedagogy of debt (Neary, 2012, 2013).

Student as Producer has been embedded across the University of Lincoln by working closely with academics, students, and professional and support staff. An extensive process of consultation and debate has led to high levels of ownership of the concept and practice of research-engaged teaching, including support from the Vice-Chancellor and the Senior Management Team, as well as staff and students working at all levels. This support is manifest for SaP particularly in its more practical variations, while the radical political implications are more controversial.

## Three dimensions

Student as Producer works in three dimensions: as a model for curriculum design, a framework for institutional change and student engagement, and as a project to recover the idea of the university as a radical political project.

### 1. Curriculum design

The curriculum at Lincoln is now filled with research-engaged teaching activities. In the Life Sciences, academics report 'a real buzz' around the Department, emanating from student involvement in research activities. In Computing Science, as

well as in Drama and in the Creative Arts and Psychology, academics report that SaP forms the basis for the curriculum with a range of examples in practice, including undergraduate students publishing alongside academics. The School of Psychology holds a student research conference each year, supported by regular seminars designed to promote research awareness and a research sensibility among undergraduate students. One very clear example of SaP in the School of Humanities is within a history programme where students are described as 'Students as Producers of History'. These curriculum developments have extended to the design of critical employability programmes in the Engineering School where employers learn about the students, challenging expectations about their readiness for the world of work.

- Students are able to publish their research in an increasing number of student research journals and through undergraduate research conferences. One of the most established is the 'Reinvention Journal', an international journal of student work, based at the University of Warwick in the UK and Monash University in Australia (<http://tinyurl.com/mkxx2ck>).
- Students from Lincoln have presented their work at the recently established British Conference for Undergraduate Research, which was hosted at the University of Central Lancashire in 2010, Warwick in 2011 and Plymouth in 2013. The next conference, in 2014, will be hosted at the University of Nottingham ([www.bcur.ac.uk](http://www.bcur.ac.uk)).

- Student as Producer at Lincoln hosted an international conference in June 2013 (<http://saspcnf13.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/>). The wide range of papers and workshops by academics and students presented demonstrated how SaP is directly impacting on the teaching practice of academics in the UK and internationally.
- Academics and students write up their collaborative research in other publications. For example, a recent edition of the Higher Education Academy's 'Enhancing Learning in the Social Sciences' journal, focused on Student as Producer (<http://tinyurl.com/lc65dsn>).

## 2a. Institutional change

An important way in which SaP is being implemented across the University is by embedding its practices and principles within the bureaucratic structures and framework for student engagement.

This redesigning has been an organic process intended to engage administrative staff, academics and students in debates about SaP (Winn and Lockwood, 2013). These procedures include External Examiner Reports, Annual Monitoring Reports, Subject Committees as well as Periodic Academic Reviews. A key process in establishing SaP has been through the protocols associated with programme validations and revalidations. During the process of programme (re-)validation academics are asked to engage with the SaP principles, which include:

- showing how courses will include research-engaged teaching
- giving examples of how academics write up their teaching as a scholarly research project
- demonstrating the extent to which students are involved in the design and delivery of programmes and courses
- showing how the course enables students to see themselves as having a role in creating their own future, in terms of employment and/or by making a progressive contribution to society (University of Lincoln, 2012).

External examiners are asked a series of questions relating to SaP on their Report forms, e.g. *What is the impact of research-engaged teaching on the student learning experience?*

The Periodic Academic Review cycle will require SaP to be considered by staff and academics for all programmes. Also, programme staff are asked to describe, as part of their Annual Monitoring Report, the extent to which SaP is active across all courses and subject areas. These reports are reviewed by central committees, creating a sense of collective intellectual endeavour (Neary and Saunders, 2011).

## 2b. Student engagement

Student as Producer is the organising principle for the way in which student engagement is delivered at Lincoln. This is making an important contribution to transforming the university community into a place of collaboration and discovery, where barriers between teaching and research are removed and where students are seen as a largely untapped source of rich and original ideas. All parts of the university are already embracing and benefiting from student engagement as can be seen in the student engagement blogs (<http://tinyurl.com/k4un46l>).

Student engagement activities are supported by the University through a Student Engagement Officer working out of the Vice-Chancellor's Office, with strong links to the Students' Union. This appointment has allowed for the development of systematic schemes to embed the model of student engagement, involving input into student induction, a comprehensive student representation system, student expert and other advisory groups, the creation and training of a team of quality student advisers, student-led committees, ensuring students are full panel members on quality committees, as well as having students on staff appointments panels.

## 3. Radical political project – Teaching the university

Student as Producer is not compulsory; rather, academics are challenged

and invited to get involved in an academic discussion on the complexity of links between teaching, learning and research in higher education. An important part of that debate is reclaiming the radical history of higher education, what Williams (2012) calls 'teaching the University'.

Student as Producer is based on a negative critique of the current university structure. The modern university is fundamentally dysfunctional, with its two core activities – research and teaching – working against each other (Boyer, 1990 and 1998).

To promote the re-engineering of the relationship between teaching and research SaP returns to the radical history of the modern university, with reference to Wilhelm von Humboldt's University of Berlin in 1810 (Humboldt 1970, original 1810) and the student protests of 1968. Humboldt's plan was to establish 'the idea of the university' as a progressive political, liberal humanist project, and the basis of civilising the population as part of the process of building the emerging nation-state. This would be done by connecting teaching and research in a programme to promote the expansive creation of new knowledge, so that the university becomes the highest level of consciousness of liberal society: or, knowledge at the level of society (Lyotard, 1979; Neary and Haggard, 2011).

The student protests of 1968 in Paris and around the world were a defining moment in the eventual failure of the liberal humanist project, when students and workers became 'the revealers of a general crisis' of capitalist society (Ross, 2002). This failure of liberal humanism was evidenced by ongoing imperialist global wars, continued repression of radical leftist political projects and the alienation and *anomie* at the centre of everyday life. An important aspect of this revelation by students was the de-mystification of the elite practice of the production of knowledge with 'research becoming something that anyone can do' (Ross, 2002).

The events of 1968 were a powerful example of student engagement, with students at the heart of a major political development, with significant consequences for the future of higher education, including the democratising of university life (Scott, 1995) and an impact on curriculum development, i.e. the idea that students are capable of carrying out research through their own independent projects (Pratt, 1997). Given the radical contribution of 1968 to current teaching methods in higher education, academics would do well to recognise what can be learned from the current wave of student protests in the UK and around the world. These include the teaching and learning activities that became a central element of student occupations at UK universities, forming part of the larger Occupy movement. Ongoing activities that came out of this moment of student protest include the Tent City University and the Free University of Liverpool (Stanistreet, 2012). The Social Science Centre, Lincoln has been developed by academics and students at the University of Lincoln, although it has no formal connection with the university. It is a worker-student cooperative, providing free higher education (<http://socialsciencecentre.org.uk/>).

The radicality of SaP is further underlined by its affinity with the writings of Walter Benjamin, especially 'Author as Producer' (1934), a text written to be presented to the Society of Anti-Fascists in Paris. In this lecture Benjamin posed the question, 'how do radical intellectuals act in a moment of crisis?' Following Brecht and the Russian Constructivists, Benjamin's answer to his own question was to enable students to see themselves as subjects rather than objects of history, as teachers, writers and performers, rather than recipients of knowledge, and to be able to recognise themselves in a social world of their own design. Benjamin argued that the process of capitalist production should be revolutionised so that humanity becomes the project rather than the resource for its own (re)production (Neary and Winn, 2009).

Although the concept of SaP is derived from 20th-century avant-garde Marxism, few teachers at Lincoln are revolutionary Marxists. Nevertheless, SaP creates a radical framework for debates and discussion about policy and strategy for teaching and learning across the university, based on a radicalised political vernacular. Given the extent to which the language of managerialism has overwhelmed the discourse of higher education this is no mean achievement.

### External relationships

Student as Producer has never been focused only at Lincoln, but was designed to impact across the whole Higher Education sector. This meant setting up effective working relationships with external agencies, including the Higher Education Academy, the Joint Information Systems Committee, the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Quality Assurance Agency, as well as engaging with external educational partners, including other universities, schools and colleges. An example of the impact can be found in the way in which SaP has been adopted by the Vanderbilt University in the US as well as the University of British Columbia in Canada. Student as Producer is embraced by significant organisations that support higher education in the UK. The Higher Education Academy recognises the importance of the work done at Lincoln to develop the concepts of 'student engagement' and 'students as partners', and the JISC has used the principles of SaP to develop a funding programme based on undergraduate students' capacities to produce technological innovations for teaching and learning (<http://tinyurl.com/nxpqxr7>).

### Where are we now?

Student as Producer is now firmly established as the organising principle for the University of Lincoln's Teaching and Learning Plan, 2011-2016. It is clear SaP has had a considerable impact at Lincoln, as well as nationally and internationally across the higher education sector. In an institutional review carried out by the QAA in 2012, the University of Lincoln was awarded

a commendation for the support of its learning enhancements and, in a series of positive judgements, SaP was seen as a model of good practice (<http://tinyurl.com/k9lz4y3>).

These forms of external mainstream recognition are very important for the work that is being done at Lincoln; but the fundamental point of SaP is about challenging the mainstream to reconsider the way in which it frames the relationships between academics, professional support and service staff and students, and, within that process, to reconsider and reinvent the real nature of higher education as part of a radical political project. In a context where the marketised model of higher education appears to be gaining strength, the reinvention of higher education as a public provision appears to be an impossible task. However, the sustainability of the private model in the UK is by no means assured (McGettigan, 2012), and is even being reversed in other countries, e.g. Chile (Somma, 2012). In other words, the future is by no means certain. It is therefore important that academics and students continue in their attempt to produce a sustainable model not only for higher education but a sustainable and progressive model for society as a whole.

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**Mike Neary** is the Dean of Teaching and Learning at the University of Lincoln.

# Reflections on the development of a dynamic learning, teaching and assessment strategy

**Karen Strickland**, Robert Gordon University, and **Anastasia Dragona** and **Rowena Pelik**, Edinburgh Napier University

## Background

Considering the importance of Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategies to the core business of universities, it would appear logical that developing a culture of scholarship in teaching and learning (SoTL), through fostering a sense of ownership and engagement from the staff, would not be difficult to achieve. However, Smith (2008, p. 395) critiques institutional LTA strategies for being static, 'highly impersonalised texts, where staff are largely absent'. Healey, O'Connor and Broadfoot (2010) highlight potential abuses of strategy as being 'imposed', raising expectations which cannot be met, being taken out of a drawer when needed as a 'rationale' and being under-resourced (p. 21). The traditional LTA strategy is thus in need of a makeover to ensure it is meaningful, useful and relevant.

Here we share reflections on the process of creating a dynamic strategy; how this has been evaluated by the staff and how this might be developed in the future. We also seek to illustrate a generic or transferable means for developing a meaningful strategy which aligns a learning and teaching resource bank and staff awards to present a coherent means of fostering ongoing engagement. Such engagement

contributes to the enhancement of the quality of the student learning experience; helps to achieve institutional change and progress; better supports staff in the development of their own academic practice; and encourages wider engagement in SoTL.

## Process of strategy development

Academic Development departments are often charged with the overall management and leadership of institutional LTA strategy (Taylor, 2005). At Edinburgh Napier, in 2009 this department undertook a consultative process involving all Schools and support services as well as the Napier Students' Association. The idea emerging from discussions was to move away from the traditional kind of strategy towards something more active, flexible and dynamic.

A three-level strategy with emphasis on a responsive online presence was developed (see Table 1). This ensured alignment of the university-level strategy with Faculty and School level interpretations and action plans as well as examples of learning and teaching practice in an open educational resource (OER) bank which exemplified operationalisation of the strategy in practice.

*Level 1:* A short framing statement and set of 10 key statements from across the University which set strategic direction and remain fixed over the five-year lifespan of our LTA Strategy.

This level may be seen as perhaps the more traditional static type of LTA strategy more commonly found in the sector; however, the approach adopted at Edinburgh Napier adds a second and third level. We have made this available as a web version and one-page printed laminates for quick reference.

*Level 2:* School and support service responses to the key themes. These statements are dynamic and allow Schools and support services to respond to each of the 10 key statements and state how they contribute to delivering this in the context of their local setting as well as asserting aspirations over the period of the Strategy. This level can be reviewed to take into account key institutional or School-level initiatives and allows close alignment with strategic aims to be articulated.

*Level 3:* An online OER bank which provides examples of good practice/case studies/innovation in LTA as well as links to policy and guidance documents specifically designed to underpin the institution's LTA Strategy.

*Table 1 Three level strategy*

Open Educational Resources have been gaining attention for more than a decade (Wiley, 2007; Yuan, MacNeill, Kraan, 2008). Designing the third level as an OER bank with case studies ensures that links can be made between institutional strategy and the practice of LTA, thus contributing to embedding a culture of SoTL.

The OER bank is an important commitment by the University to sharing and disseminating SoTL both across the institution and the sector. Buckley (2012) suggests barriers such as a lack of trust and incentives have a negative impact on effective knowledge-sharing, therefore a key consideration was to protect the intellectual property of the case studies with the Creative Commons Licensing (CCL).

In order to foster ongoing engagement with the OER, the University committed to recognising staff achievements through the creation of 'Best Practice Awards'. Case studies from the resource bank are judged by a panel of academic staff and awards presented at staff conferences. These awards recognise staff excellence in SoTL and motivate staff to share practice.

Each time the themed awards have been announced, there has been a corresponding rise in submissions to the Resource Bank, arguably evidence of ongoing staff engagement with our current LTA Strategy that would not have been achieved through the more traditional approach. Whilst awards are not a new way of engaging staff, our alignment of them to the LTA strategy was purposeful and has resulted in ongoing engagement with the strategy beyond its initial development and launch.

The number of uploads to the Resource Bank was encouraging, with 80 case studies, 20 policy documents and 37 guidance documents available at the time of the launch. This continues to be added to, suggesting staff see the Resource Bank as a useful platform to share practice.

### **Role of the Resource Bank in developing staff**

Increasingly, the Resource Bank has been used to support the University's staff development activities, with staff on the PG Cert in T&L in HE and the MSc in Blended and Online Education being encouraged to share and disseminate projects and case studies. Similarly, the University has a successful Teaching Fellowship scheme (Edinburgh Napier University, 2013), which recognises excellence in teaching and learning, and staff working towards this or who have the award are encouraged to demonstrate use of the Resource Bank in informing their practice and to contribute to the Bank themselves. Embedding the institutional strategy in this way helps to promote the engagement with SoTL as an important endeavour, in keeping with earlier assertions by Vardi and Quin (2011).

### **Evaluation of the new strategy**

We embarked on an evaluation at the end of the first year to research the usefulness of this approach and also to refine the Strategy, taking into account current drivers and influences, both internally and in the wider sector. A mixed methods research design was used to evaluate staff perceptions of the LTA Strategy. An online survey questionnaire (using Ultimate Survey) was used and all staff were invited to contribute. A total of 43 of the 1612 eligible members of staff took part.

### **Ethical considerations**

The study was granted ethical approval with only those staff consenting to participate able to proceed through the questionnaire. In the interviews the purpose and process was explained to participants, giving them the option to pause or cancel the interview (it was deemed necessary to make this explicit, especially since the interviews were recorded and transcribed for data accuracy).

### **Analysis**

Descriptive statistical analysis was performed on the data from the online questionnaire using measures of central tendency for each question response.

Qualitative analysis from the open questions in the online survey and the interviews was subject to thematic analysis. Two of the authors independently explored the data for significant statements which provided a number of preliminary themes and then compared findings. We then grouped similar preliminary themes and condensed them into four theme categories.

### **Findings**

The questionnaire consisted of a five-point Likert scale questions and some free text questions for open comments. Overall, 35% of the staff who responded felt the new approach had been more meaningful and had inspired them

to be more creative and more innovative in their practice. It had also encouraged 64% to consider the pedagogical underpinning to their teaching practice. 21% also indicated that the Resource Bank contained useful resources to support practice. Whilst it may be argued that there remains a significant number of respondents who claim this has had no effect, we consider the approach to developing a dynamic LTA strategy successful in contributing to the embedding of a culture of SoTL as compared with the previous static document, as in the latter we would not have seen engagement with the second and third levels at all.

## Qualitative evaluation

Three theme categories emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data: *sharing practice and providing inspiration*, *promoting awareness and engaging staff* and *usefulness and relevance to practice*. Each theme will now be discussed with quotes from the data which serve to illustrate the authenticity of the thematic analysis.

### Sharing practice and providing inspiration

This captures the essence of how our participants viewed the Strategy and Resource Bank as a day-to-day tool for embedding SoTL in their practice. This concurs with the findings of the survey where the majority of respondents agreed that the LTA Strategy has inspired them to be creative and more innovative and to explore the pedagogical underpinnings in their practice. The Resource Bank is especially conducive to the sharing of good practice among staff:

*'Examples of common practice across disciplines (i.e. seeing how similar approaches work in different subject areas) as well as getting ideas for how approaches used in select discipline areas could be adapted to my own.'*

And also for providing inspiration:

*'It is good to have somewhere to showplace innovative practice to share with colleagues. Avoids reinventing the wheel and provides new ideas.'*

Through the Bank, staff can access examples of common practice, new ideas they can adapt to their own practice, as well as more specialised resources – for example on employability or new technologies. Feedback is a particularly important area for which support is often sought – and found – in the Resource Bank.

New members of staff have found the Resource Bank particularly useful. Some mentioned that through it they can compare teaching practice and find answers to various problems:

*'As a new member of staff I get the chance to compare my teaching to that of others so I can also improve.'*

Similarly, the Bank provides inspiration for more experienced staff who may have become used to tried and tested teaching methods but are motivated to try something new:

*'Some aspects of the strategy have, I guess, challenged me and got me to think about my practice; the fact that I have made changes, hopefully, is good for my students.'*

### Promoting awareness and engaging staff

One of the aims was to help staff engage with University issues, wider sector practice, as well as other members of staff in the institution and of course the Strategy itself. This theme illustrates how including an open access resource bank has raised the awareness of staff and their engagement with the strategy compared to previous versions:

*'The examples in the LTA Resource Bank have helped bring the LTA Strategy to life, for me.'*

During the interviews, the enthusiasm of those responsible for bringing the Strategy and Resource Bank to life as well as the dedication of some senior staff were praised as having a positive impact. This highlights the importance of involving key staff to 'champion' the LTA Strategy in order to foster local engagement:

*'I think we have some really good examples in our faculty of teaching fellows and senior teaching fellows who really have embraced the strategy.'*

The LTA Strategy achieves inclusivity to a great extent, according to those interviewed. The sample included non-academic members of staff, who seem to engage with it easily and consider it relevant.

*'Our role is to support the development of academic staff, so it's really helpful in that we are often sharing ideas across disciplines[...] and on a number of occasions I have said to people, "Oh there is a case study on that, you should go and look at that", or I have actually printed it out and taken in along to a meeting...'*

This example is from an academic developer, and gives a good illustration of how professional services work alongside academic staff to promote engagement with strategy and embed a culture of SoTL.

### Usefulness and relevance to practice

In the interviews, the LTA Strategy was praised by the participants as a well-articulated document of good length. The innovative, three-layer approach demonstrates an attempt to change and provides evidence to externals that as a University we take our learning, teaching and assessment seriously and seek innovative solutions. Because of its unique format, the Edinburgh Napier LTA Strategy has made an impression:

*'This is the strategy that has had the most impact on me.'*

This type of strategy can fit with School priorities and principles more easily, as each School or service has a voice through the Second Level statements. Individual members of staff also have a voice through the Resource Bank. Feedback suggests that the alignment between learning outcomes and assessment is much clearer than previous strategies:

*'[The LTA Strategy] has been helpful, though, in being much more thoughtful about the alignment between the learning outcome and the assessment.'*

On the other hand, some of the more experienced members of staff felt that the Strategy has had no impact on their practice. However, they still recognised the importance of having it, at least on paper, and that it is still useful to certain members of staff:

*'[Strategies] can only do good and certainly do no harm.'*

As would be expected with any innovative tool, some technical difficulties with the Resource Bank still need to be overcome. The classification of case studies and the option of a better search facility were particularly welcomed.

The dynamic nature of the Strategy and Resource Bank allows it to support ongoing developments at a strategic level:

*'We should continue to grow and develop it, and continue to think about how to use it proactively and strategically as a resource for planning LTA developments internally and sharing our good practice externally.'*

## Discussion

The findings suggest the Resource Bank in particular was seen as a useful addition to underpin the traditional strategic narrative, and achieving our objectives. The themes which have emerged from the qualitative data suggest that our approach has gone some way to ensuring the scholarship of teaching and learning is articulated, as staff see a strong link between the institutional strategy and their teaching practice.

Some Schools actively support staff to contribute to the Resource Bank while others leave staff largely to contribute on their own. This suggests that active local School and Faculty management support for strategic initiatives is crucial in fostering academic staff engagement. A number of barriers to institutional change relevant to embedding SoTL into the culture of the institution have been identified in the literature (Mårtensson *et al.*, 2011). Our findings suggest active engagement with strategy is difficult to implement when staff are overworked. The abundance of clever and innovative ideas in the Resource Bank may go to waste when staff have no time to engage with them. These issues need to be addressed. It was also noted that such a project requires constant monitoring and maintenance in order to continue to be relevant to staff.

## Conclusions

This new model of LTA strategy has breathed life into the traditional approach. It has promoted local ownership as well as fostering a feeling of this being a useful tool to help inform and develop teaching practice across the institution.

A conclusion to be drawn is that the level of engagement and the subsequent engagement with the Strategy and Resource Bank has had a positive cultural impact which is successful since the strategy promoted local interpretation

and ownership. It is, however, important to emphasise that it is the active support in particular from Schools and Faculties that may influence how well staff engage.

The use of technology has provided a rich resource which showcases the work of staff and enables sharing and networking opportunities across the institution. Such a move from the more traditional, static approach has produced a strategy that actually does inform the practice of teaching in a meaningful way. It is important to note that the perceived usefulness and relevance of the Strategy and Resource Bank to the practice of teaching of academic staff was much greater than with the previous, more traditional approach. If institutions continue to produce strategies that are static and do not bear relevance to staff, it is likely these strategies will have a limited impact upon the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Our LTA Strategy and Resource Bank is available at <http://staff.napier.ac.uk/LTA>.

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**Karen Strickland** is Associate Head in the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Robert Gordon University, and **Anastasia Dragona** is the Projects Officer and **Rowena Pelik** the Director of Academic Strategy and Practice, Office of the Vice-Principal (Academic), at Edinburgh Napier University.

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# Staff: Enhancing teaching

## *A report from a project supported by the 'Developing and Supporting the Curriculum' Scottish Enhancement Theme*

**Pete Cannell** and **Alison Gilmour**, Open University in Scotland

The tenth annual Enhancement Themes Conference in June 2013 represented a milestone for the enhancement-led approach to quality assurance in Scotland. There have now been nine themes and where initially there were two themes a year, more recently a single theme has run for a more extended period. 2012-13 was the second year of the latest three-year theme 'Developing and Supporting the Curriculum (DSC)'. At the start of the year the DSC Steering Committee commissioned three cross-sector projects to support its development. This article reports on the outcomes of one of these projects, 'Staff: Enhancing Teaching' (Cannell and Gilmour, 2013), which we completed between January and June 2013.

The remit for the project was to scope the key issues in professional development for teachers in Scottish higher education (HE). We were asked to investigate five specific questions:

1. How are staff (academic, academic-related or support staff) in teaching roles supported, formally and informally, to develop their teaching?
2. How are staff supported at different stages in their careers?
3. What recognition and reward is there for teaching staff?
4. How is it known that staff are developing their teaching, and how is practice shared?
5. What are the challenges and opportunities in all of these?

There are nineteen Scottish higher education institutions (HEIs) and our aim was to capture experience from across the sector. In designing our research we took advantage of the collegiate nature of Scottish HE. Whilst the size of the sector is undoubtedly a factor, policy initiatives that encourage partnership, and the Enhancement Themes in particular, have engendered an open and collaborative culture. We were also very conscious that we were

undertaking the research at a time of significant change. For example, all HEIs are in a process of dealing with the implications of the new UK-wide Professional Standards Framework for Higher Education (UKPSF) and specifically in Scotland HEIs also have to think about the implications for student diversity of 'Curriculum for Excellence' – the radical reform of secondary education that is being introduced. Further challenges stem from the fact that while full-time undergraduate study is free to Scottish residents, many institutions attract significant numbers of students from the high fee regime in England. Long-standing issues, identified by Brew in the 1990s (Brew, 1995), of massification, internationalisation and the impact of new technologies, remain. In this context a discussion of professional development is necessarily affected by the status of teaching in the context of the overall academic role. Indeed, a recent European Union report noted that:

*'Institutions need to ensure there is manifest and actual parity of esteem for teaching and research in their core identity and culture and expressed in their systems of rewards, incentives, promotions and priorities.'* (European Union, 2013, p. 23)

As we developed our research framework, we looked at the literature available on professional development and the enhancement of student learning and found little directly addressing our research questions. We decided to collect evidence through extended interviews with a key member of staff in every Scottish HEI, a structured cross-sector workshop and an online survey of teaching staff in Scottish HEIs. Formal responsibility and organisational structures to support professional development vary across the HE sector in Scotland and our group of key informants included a

majority of Educational Developers, but also senior staff from Human Resources, Deans and Vice-Principals Learning and Teaching. In the end we spoke to individuals from eighteen out of the nineteen Scottish HEIs.

Everyone we spoke to was hugely generous with their time, supportive of the project and thoughtful about the challenges faced by their institution. All of our interviews were recorded and partially transcribed and we engaged in an iterative process of analysis to identify key and emerging themes as our pool of data grew. Before we had completed all the interviews, we held the cross-sector workshop, which attracted a wider range of staff from sixteen HEIs but also included a small number of the key informants who had participated in the institutional interviews. The workshop was very much a participatory event: we presented some of our early findings from the institutional interviews and asked the participants to prioritise and interrogate our categories against their experience as practitioners. The notes from this event were valuable in triangulating our emerging conclusions.

The final contribution to our evidence comprised data from an online survey aimed at 'rank and file' teachers in Scottish HE. The survey design drew on the five key questions that formed the background of our research and the early findings from the institutional interviews. The scale of the survey was restricted by a relatively short window of opportunity (April and May 2013) and by the need to obtain permission from institutions. We found in general that institutional contacts were keen to engage, but in some cases were constrained by a desire not to over-survey staff, and in others by a specific interest in obtaining feedback from a particular subset of staff. Some institutions felt unable to engage in the time available.

Upon closing the survey we had received 281 responses from staff across 16 institutions. The responses were skewed by institutions and institution type, with more than half from the *post-92s* and the Open University in Scotland and relatively few from the *ancients* and the *newer* universities. Seven institutions provided more than 20 responses. Forty-eight per cent of the respondents had been teaching in HE for more than ten years; more than a third had a postgraduate certificate in learning and teaching in higher education and twenty-nine per cent had some category of Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. The sample was opportunistic and in no sense representative of the demographics of the Scottish sector. However, whilst we were unable to obtain good quality demographic data for the sector as a whole, from the limited information available to us it would appear that the sample was skewed towards staff who had studied accredited learning and teaching qualifications. The level of engagement of respondents was very strong and in particular many devoted considerable time and thought to the small number of open questions. As a result we feel that the survey did provide an authentic window into the views of teaching staff.

Taken together the data provided a rich picture of the state of play across the Scottish sector. Scottish HEIs are diverse in terms of mission and student profile. We found that some themes emerged most strongly in particular groupings of similar institutions, but we were also able to identify themes common to all institutions. The key institutional contacts highlighted very specific drivers for changing the way in which professional development is structured and supported. Almost all institutions are engaging with the new UKPSF and some are setting challenging targets for the numbers of accredited staff. Most staff we interviewed saw the changes in the UKPSF, and new or potential requirements for public information on the accreditation status of their teaching staff, as a positive catalyst for re-thinking well-established practice. Postgraduate certificates in learning and teaching are commonly used

for the development of staff new in a teaching role. In many HEIs these are up for review or revalidation and changes are in train to accommodate the revised UKPSF. However, the extension of the framework to four levels also seems to have stimulated renewed attention on the continuing development of established staff.

The Scottish system of 'Enhancement Led Institutional Review', which sits alongside the Enhancement Themes in an integrated system of teaching enhancement, also has an influence. Respondents suggested that the need for regular institutional reflection on enhancement is driving change in Learning and Teaching Strategies and that these in turn have an impact on thinking around frameworks for professional development.

The structures that underpin professional development in different institutions vary in ways that do not map neatly onto mission or role. Educational Developers play an important role across the sector but their organisation within each institution varies. In some cases they form a distinct unit, in a minority of institutions there is a strong link with human resources, and in some instances educational development staff have a strong faculty, school or discipline link. Furthermore, the locus for professional development differs between and within institutions, comprising a matrix of generic pedagogical support through educational developers, specific training, often led by HR, and department-based professional development.

Almost everyone we spoke to, and most of the replies to our survey, stressed that lack of time is a barrier to effective engagement with professional development. How this pressure is experienced varies. In the research-intensive institutions staff tend to feel that teaching, and development activity to support teaching, often takes second place to research. In the *post-92s* it is more often a complex mix of workload issues including teaching, research, consultancy and administration that has the same effect. Two of Scotland's HEIs teach

at further and higher education levels and in these institutions teaching workload was quoted as a particular issue. The survey responses aligned with the institutional interviews in many respects; however, there were some significant nuances and points of difference. Some of these reflected different individual positions in relation to management and organisation. A number of staff felt that developmental issues raised in annual staff appraisal could be better integrated with opportunities for development. However, there is also a view from teaching staff that it sometimes feels risky to admit to having developmental needs, since that might be perceived as a weakness in professional skills. Interviewees also commented on how initiatives designed to be supportive and developmental can be perceived as managerial.

There was an interesting dichotomy of views in relation to new technology. Some institutional informants felt that staff tend to want 'how to' training-oriented support, overlooking the pedagogical context. On the other hand teaching staff who responded to the survey sought to go beyond the 'how to' and expressed a need for more time to explore the pedagogy of technology-supported learning.

We also noted a widespread disjuncture between policies on recognition and reward for teaching excellence and staff perceptions of practice. We found a widespread belief that teaching has a lower status than research, even in non-research-intensive institutions. This accords with the findings of an HEA study carried out across the UK (HEA, 2009). Nevertheless across the sector there is also clear evidence of movement in the direction of clearer criteria for promotion on the basis of teaching excellence.

There is a trend across the sector to make it mandatory for full-time staff new to a teaching role to undertake at least one module of a postgraduate certificate in higher education. We found anecdotal evidence that the cadre of individuals who have been through this experience tends to continue to engage with

opportunities for professional and pedagogical development. However, there are many categories of staff who teach in HE, including part-time and visiting lecturers and graduate teaching assistants. There is much less consistency across the sector about how these staff are supported, although there is evidence of growing interest in developing sustainable and effective practice. New initiatives in the sector include OpenPAD, an HEA-accredited route developed by the Open University, which provides flexible routes to all four levels of HEA fellowship as an alternative to the postgraduate certificate.

Support for the continuing professional development of staff is much patchier across the sector. Most institutions maintain programmes of staff development events and opportunities, although smaller and split-site institutions find this a challenge. There was a consistent view that generic learning and teaching workshops have become less well attended over time and a shared view that events targeted at particular groups of staff with a common subject or other interest are more effective. There has been a growth of learning and teaching conferences over the last decade and staff 'value the chance to talk to colleagues' at these events. It is increasingly common to involve students actively in these conferences and a number of respondents considered that the student-led workshops are the best aspects of the conferences. Nevertheless, there is a real worry that these events do not reach out far enough: 'You tend to find that there is a core group within that which is the same each year.' Some institutions are now starting to develop comprehensive CPD frameworks that encourage the development of the scholarship of teaching and learning and align with the four levels of the UKPSF. As a follow up to this research we plan to develop a further study of these initiatives, which can form a good practice case study for other institutions. In this area however, there are some important tensions. Debate can focus on generic *versus* subject-specific. In the survey responses, however, teaching staff expressed eloquently their desire for support

in their subject context, but also in a broader pedagogical framework with the chance to talk both to their immediate subject colleagues and to their peers more widely and across subject and institutional boundaries. There was a sense that staff felt that opportunities to do this were diminishing. Several respondents were worried about the danger of a disciplinary and purely institutional focus creating silos.

The final report recorded three significant themes that run through staff responses:

- a strong call for opportunities for sharing with colleagues within the institution – with this including opportunities for discussion and for observation of practice among colleagues
- an interest in sharing experience with colleagues in other institutions through visits and meetings
- a strong interest in issues connected with assessment and feedback.

We also asked staff to prioritise their professional development needs and amongst a diverse set of responses the strongest expressions of need were for:

- engagement with colleagues – observation, peer observation of teaching, opportunities for discussion, half-day themed discussions on specific issues
- time and space for reflection
- opportunities to learn about new techniques and new technologies at a level that goes beyond simply 'how to'
- opportunities to engage with learning and teaching issues in my discipline
- moving beyond routine evaluation to more opportunities for pedagogical research – this perhaps links to a desire to be able to engage with more of the relevant research literature.

The concerns of the institutional contacts intersected with those of the broader group of staff but tended to be more strategic. In terms of pedagogy the dominant concerns that emerged from the interviews were:

- working with new technology to enhance teaching, keeping up to

date with developments (particularly distance learning) and ensuring that changes keep pedagogy to the fore

- approaches to assessment
- internationalisation
- Curriculum for Excellence and student diversity.

Strategic and policy issues included:

- adequate resources – building in time to staff workload planning
- finding a stronger space for learning and teaching in light of the REF (this is a big issue in research-intensive institutions)
- understanding what constitutes good teaching and evidencing enhancement
- developing systematic ways of supporting the career-long development of all staff, the hard to engage, part-time staff and Graduate Teaching Assistants
- working better with HR and finance to support professional development – finding a common language and understanding.

By June 2013, when we completed the final report and presented some of our findings at the Enhancement Themes conference, we felt that we had made some progress with all five of our questions. Most problematic is question four: 'How is it known that staff are developing their teaching?' We were able to identify activity aimed at development but it was much harder to find evidence of career-long development. In part this may be a consequence of the relative lack of attention that has been given to providing systematic opportunities for career-long development, but it is also an issue that requires further research and development.

In conclusion, we found a sector that is conscious of being in flux as well as detecting potentially important cultural changes. A number of our respondents noted that new (early career) staff are more likely to be accepting of the need to engage with the pedagogy and practice of learning and teaching and more likely to share their students' experiences of a world in which digital technology is ubiquitous. There are interesting developments afoot across the sector

and we are pleased that the Steering Committee of the Enhancement theme is supporting us in another year of activity to tease out some of the issues and challenges we highlighted in our report. Our intention is to continue to work with colleagues across the sector to produce material that can support new developments and insights into effective practice in professional development.

The full 'Staff: Enhancing Teaching Final Project Report', on which this article is based, can be found on the Enhancement Themes Website

([www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk)). We would like to acknowledge the financial support and encouragement provided by QAA Scotland and the contributions made by colleagues across the Scottish HE sector.

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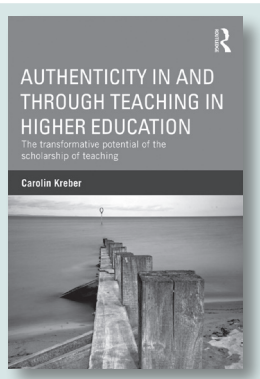
**Pete Cannell** is Depute Director at the Open University in Scotland with responsibility for Learning, Teaching and Curriculum; and **Alison Gilmour** is a Project Officer within the Learning Development Team at the Open University in Scotland.

# Book Review

## Authenticity in and through teaching in higher education – The transformative potential of the scholarship of teaching

Carolin Kreber

Routledge, 2013



Make no mistake – this is a philosophy book written by a philosopher. It is demanding and rewarding in equal measure. The text on the back cover is probably a little off-putting as you are immediately introduced to the concepts of the title and several others (the existential, the critical and the communitarian). However, move beyond this and into the first chapter and you are soon, aided by the author, wrestling with the authenticity of teaching practice.

Chapter two outlines the complexity of authenticity including discussion of common definitions: being true to self and consistency in what you think and do. These are followed by more involved discussion drawing on a variety of philosophical work and ending with Taylor's (1992) communitarian perspective which notes that authenticity is both inward-looking, focusing on the individual, and outward-facing, stressing its social dimension and a person's connectedness with the world around them.

Chapter three gets to the heart of authenticity in and through teaching. Consider these two quotes:

*'Academics who engage in teaching authentically (authenticity in teaching) provide opportunities for students to become authentic (i.e. fostering the students' authenticity through teaching)'.* (p. 5)

*'As teachers provide opportunities for students to become authentic (i.e. fostering the students' authenticity through teaching), they share their referent power and become more authentic (Buber's I-Thou) (i.e. teachers develop their own authenticity through teaching).'*' (p. 55)

Powerful, challenging material. Interestingly, whilst I was reading this book I was also reading *Pink Floyd and Philosophy (careful with that axiom Eugene)* edited by George Reisch, and came across the same concept (Buber's I-Thou) in the section by David MacGregor Johnson writing about existential encounters on the dark side of the moon (and beyond). MacGregor Johnson (2007) notes that Buber was concerned with how people had lost 'a genuine mode of encountering others' (p. 122) owing to a focus on analysis, classification and theorisation leading to the treatment of people as objects. Buber, he argues, suggested encountering as a reciprocal relationship. An authentic one.

Further chapters consider the scholarship of teaching and how this might be enacted, including an exhortation to reflect on practice and engage in theoretical interpretation based on current research. However, this enactment Kreber argues needs to be virtuous, that is, guided by the virtues of truthfulness, courage and justice and not simply confirming of long-held convictions or existing preconceptions.

Kreber argues for the requirement to be critically reflective and its role in the scholarship of teaching and learning. Learning from such action, she posits, can be instrumental, communicative or emancipatory – 'doing the right things better' (p. 120).

To conclude, two further quotes:

*'Authenticity, understood as a willingness to avoid complacency and compliance in how we approach our teaching and engage in critique and contestation might then also make the actual teaching of the subject, and by extension, the students' learning of the subject, more authentic.'* (p. 42)

'Concern lies no longer merely with whether higher education affects what and how students know, and what they can do with this acquired knowledge, but also, and importantly, who they are becoming.' (p. 45)

Professor Kreber would love New Zealand law which requires that universities 'accept a role as critic and conscience of society' (Education Act, 1989).

Any HE teacher with more than a passing interest in their own practice should read this book in the same way that anyone with more than a passing interest in recorded music should own a copy of *Blonde on Blonde* and *Blood on the*

*Tracks*. All reward long after initial engagement, and are worth frequent revisits.

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**Dr Peter Gossman** is an Academic Developer at Manchester Metropolitan University.

# Ask not what your students' union can do for you...

**Debbie McVitty**, National Union of Students

Though aware that I am at significant risk of preaching to the choir, there is a strong case for educational developers working much more closely and strategically with the staff and officers of the students' union. Educational development units and students' unions share a core purpose of ensuring students are enabled to learn and succeed. Educational developers do it through developing lecturers and learning environments while students' unions do it through amplifying and organising the student voice, particularly at course and departmental level.

But working together is rarely as straightforward as sending a friendly email or picking up the phone. The culture of students' unions is distinct from that of higher education institutions and, similarly, is highly variable. It is not always straightforward to identify who should be the primary point of contact or what activities would benefit from a joined-up approach. Students' unions can have a vast remit in addition to the student voice function, spanning everything from running shops and nightclubs to engaging students in environmental and community-facing projects. Students' union staff are typically overstretched and student officers are normally juggling with multiple and competing priorities.

It is too easy to fall into the trap of expecting the union to field a student voice as and when required by their institution. Students' unions invest significant resource in training and supporting their representatives; moreover they have their own (student-determined) agenda which may not cohere with the priorities of their institution or its constituent parts. A partnership approach requires the educational development unit and the student voice team at the union to positively recognise each other as strategically important stakeholders and determine what help each can seek from the other in their work, at the same time as identifying areas where sharing work could have a wider value to the institution, academics and students. It also means politely agreeing to disagree if a shared agenda genuinely cannot be found.

## What your students' union can do for you

1. Give you a steer on the development of learning and teaching policies. There is nothing worse than implementing a new policy only for students to raise merry hell about it. Involving the union at the outset of the development process means that you can draw on the expertise of staff and student reps who are closer to the experiences and lives of students

and can catch any issues before they become controversial.

2. Engage students on academic and teaching development programmes. Using data from student-led teaching awards to stimulate discussion can be a highly effective way to look at teaching practice from the perspectives of students. Hearing students speak to their priorities, motivations and experience as learners should be a core part of every academic's development, and it also helps students formulate meaningful feedback through dialogue rather than relying on scoresheets.

3. Share data on student experience and representation. Students' unions can be incredibly rich in data from exercises like collecting the minutes of student-staff liaison committees, reports of student reps and GOAT-ing (Going Out and Talking) exercises. But they do not always have the resource to make the most of the data. If they are willing to share data, the insights generated could be fascinating.

## What you can do for your students' union

1. Help them develop their student representatives. Most students' unions offer initial training to their course

and departmental reps, followed by advice and support and further training opportunities throughout the year. Most wish they could do more to help their reps be effective agents of education change – something educational developers tend to know a few things about. Pointing union staff towards useful research they can share with reps, advising on the delivery of support using technology, or co-presenting a development activity with a member of SU staff could add a lot of value.

2. Support and champion student-led teaching awards. Student-led teaching awards are incredibly positive for the institutional culture and generate rich data on how students perceive great teaching. But not every union has the resource to do everything they would hope to do with their awards scheme,

especially in using the data they generate to effect change.

3. Mentor and develop their education researchers. To ensure that the education change sought will make a meaningful difference to students' experiences robust evidence is necessary, but students' unions are expected to produce evidence of a quality that stands up to scrutiny by experienced academics in short periods of time and without a lot of resource to throw behind it. Students' unions need to develop their education research capacity and being able to draw on the experience within their institution is the most efficient way to do it.

### What you can do together

1. If it makes sense for your context, ditch the separate institutional

learning and teaching and course rep conferences and have joint events where academics and students work side by side to improve their learning environment.

2. Form a community of practice. Undertake action learning and joint research projects. Swap interesting articles and reports. Have coffee and enthuse about why student engagement is so important, and then disagree about what it means and have an impassioned debate.

3. Advocate the importance of learning and teaching in your institution. A shared agenda is always more powerful than a niche interest.

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

## SEDA News

### Events

#### SEDA Spring Teaching, Learning and Assessment Conference

##### Engaging Students: Engaging Staff

15-16 May 2014, Copthorne Hotel, Newcastle

Open for bookings at [www.seda.ac.uk](http://www.seda.ac.uk).

#### SEDA Annual Conference

##### Opportunities and Challenges for Academic Development in a Post-digital Age

13-14 November 2014, National College Learning and Conference Centre, Nottingham

Proposals are currently invited. See [www.seda.ac.uk](http://www.seda.ac.uk) for details.

#### SEDA Writing Retreat

9-10 April 2014 or 9-11 April 2014, Swarthmoor Hall, Ulverston, Cumbria

A two, or three, day residential event offering support and dedicated writing time in beautiful surroundings.

Booking is now open at [www.seda.ac.uk](http://www.seda.ac.uk).

### New Publications

#### SEDA Special 35 – SEDA Small Grants: Celebrating the Scholarship of Educational Development

Available for purchase now on the SEDA website at £12.00.

### SEDA Fellowships Scheme

SEDA welcomes **Marita Grimwood**, who has taken over from **Shân Wareing** as the SEDA Fellowship Co-ordinator. A very big thank-you to Shân who has carried out the role since 2011, as well as being Chair of the Services and Enterprise Committee.

### SEDA Committees

A big thank you to **Sally Bradley**, who has stepped down as Co-Chair of the Conference and Events Committee, and welcome to **Sandy Cope** who has taken over from Sally.

### SEDA Office Staff

We offer a warm welcome to **Joseph Callanan** (pictured below) who has replaced **Ann Aitken** as SEDA's Events and Publications Officer.



# Letter from America

**Joelle Adams**, Bath Spa University

Dear SEDA

Greetings from Toronto on a cold, sunny December morning! I am here conducting interviews for my Higher Education Academy (HEA) International Scholarship project, *Assessment and Feedback in Creative Subjects*. My mandate is to investigate learning, teaching, and assessment in American arts and other 'creative' programmes and to gather examples of innovative practice that might benefit similar UK programmes. So far, I've met with students, teachers, educational developers, and writing centre leaders at institutions in Toronto, New York, the San Francisco Bay area, and Santa Monica: a whirlwind tour of the US and Canada, punctuated with lovely scenery and stimulating cultural events.

The research progresses well, though as you will appreciate, some of the most interesting findings and experiences have been unexpected. As a careful planner and linear thinker, I can find diversions uncomfortable, but of course this is also the most exhilarating part of the process. For example, I have been lucky enough to meet professionals in a range of creative fields during my travels, and many of them have agreed to be interviewed about their expectations

of new graduates and how feedback continues to feed development in industry contexts. These serendipitous meetings have given the project a new texture and I think will help make the outputs more rich and meaningful.

The title of the project has taken on unexpected meaning in two ways. First, the concept of 'assessment' in North America tends to be conflated with what we call 'quality assurance' in the UK; this has led to some in-depth discussions with American colleagues about the relationship between these two aspects of ensuring a meaningful learning experience for students. Second, the word 'creative' has been more apt than 'arts' or 'art and design' as a description of the subjects under investigation, as I have also been able to delve into areas such as software development that are not strictly 'arts' as such, but are certainly 'creative'.

Our North American colleagues have been generous with their time and ideas. The biggest hurdle has been the more stringent ethics processes, but once I have cleared the bureaucracy, individuals have welcomed me into their departments and offices, often providing introductions to other colleagues. Speaking to students has proved more difficult: ethics clearance

has been one challenge, but of course logistics is another issue altogether.

While the data are still to be analysed and interpreted, my conversations with educators and students here in North America have been inspiring. I have been reminded of why we are all called to do this work and how important education is for the evolution of individuals and society. We owe our students our best energy and must remain vigilant in our attempts to keep their best interests at the centre of all we do, regardless of government agenda, institutional red tape, and our own egos. That may be the most important finding of this whole trip.

As I continue on the final leg of my journey, I am already looking forward to sharing my findings and ideas with my SEDA colleagues on my return to the UK in early 2014. For more information about the Ron Cooke International Scholarship Scheme, and my project, visit the HEA website.

All the best from across the pond,

Joelle Adams

**Joelle Adams** is Deputy Director Library Services (Learning Development) at Bath Spa University.

## Developing Open University Associate Lecturers at a distance: Maximising opportunities

**Annie Eardley** and **Elke St John**, Open University in the North West

### Background

The Open University in the North West (OUNW) supports approximately 700 part-time Associate Lecturers (ALs) who are widely dispersed over a geographical region stretching from Scotland to south of Birmingham. Each faculty is represented locally by full-time Academics (Staff Tutors) who

manage those ALs and are responsible for their personal and professional development.

Historically, professional development activities have been delivered at face-to-face meetings at the OU offices in Manchester or at other venues in the North West. Events vary

from a biennial conference with around 150 participants in parallel sessions, to evening or weekend meetings on pre-advertised topics or individual meetings with ALs where needs have been identified.

## Developing a relevant programme

The AL's role is to support students through their studies and to complement module materials through tutorials (face to face in local venues), online either synchronously (using a web conferencing programme) or asynchronously (using mainly forums and wikis), and through the marking of assignments providing individualised teaching through comprehensive comments. This results in some ALs only having contacts with students and other OU staff at a distance, creating a set of particular professional development needs which can be summed up as follows:

- To build a community of practice
- To break down isolation
- To update technological skills to develop excellence in teaching
- To update subject specific knowledge
- To share good practice
- To be flexible and robust in a dynamic environment.

Although an expectation to undertake 2 days of Staff Development is built into the AL's contract, there is a range of constraints due to the idiosyncratic nature of the AL's situation:

- Lack of time due to the fact that many ALs are also employed in other institutions
- Difficulty of travelling to the local OU centre for an event, particularly when ALs live far from the venue
- Reduced availability of ALs on weekday evenings and Saturdays due to the clash with tutorials normally organised at those times
- A very wide range of IT skills amongst ALs
- Reluctance to embrace new systems, particularly amongst experienced OU ALs
- No payment for attendance although travel expenses are reimbursed
- A difficulty to reach those who would most benefit from professional development and the necessity to support those less enthusiastic, the 'late majority' or 'laggards' in Rogers' (2003) terms, to embrace new methods
- Unstable student numbers leading to uncertainty for ALs' job security which can diminish commitment to the institution.

In order to meet the specific professional development needs of ALs in the OUNW and to disseminate best practice, a customised programme of cross-faculty events (addressing generic skills) is presented on a yearly basis. Central to this programme is Blackboard Collaborate®, the use of which is not only one of the most important topics within staff development but also a tool integral to the delivery of the programme itself. Thus the conditions for situated learning are met since ALs are interacting with the software in a way similar to how their learners experience it. In addition, a web-conferencing programme offers more opportunities for ALs to participate in development activities, saving time and travel whilst ensuring engagement with changing technology.

This paper reports an online staff development programme undertaken using Elluminate®. The OU has recently adopted a new online teaching system called OU Live which is a bespoke version of Blackboard Collaborate®. The programme of staff development described here would be equally applicable to other online audio-conferencing systems.

## Using a web conferencing programme

In 2009, the Open University adopted Elluminate® for its synchronous desktop collaboration and communication requirements and for ALs to deliver online tutorials. This replaced the in-house system Lyceum which was used extensively for language courses. Elluminate's® successor product, Blackboard Collaborate® has subsequently been adopted by many faculties either as an alternative to face to face, particularly in geographically dispersed areas, or as a blended offering alternating face-to-face meetings and synchronous online sessions. In addition, it is widely used by students for peer support outside scheduled tutorial sessions.

The OUNW has traditionally organised a biennial conference for ALs. For the academic year 2011-12, we initiated instead a programme of smaller events. In order to address some of the needs outlined above, we decided to offer sessions to take place entirely online as well as to organise face-to-face sessions where participants could join remotely via Elluminate®. This was made possible by the availability of suitable IT equipment in our regional centre (large screen/monitor, outside stereo speakers, lapel and roaming microphones and webcam).

In addition to specific technical training sessions on using the software itself, cross-faculty events covering pedagogy and student support were delivered via Elluminate®. We felt that the best way to provide training about an online system was to carry it online using the common technique of 'the medium is the message' thus providing an environment for deep learning and understanding (Anderson, Reder and Simon, 1996). Offering such staff development is not only pedagogically sound because ALs gain a deeper understanding of the online classroom through the participant role, but it is also very time efficient considering that ALs do not have to travel to the regional centre.

In 2011-12, 14 sessions were offered which were designed to support both acquisitive and participatory modes of learning (Sfard 1998). In particular the programme was structured according to Salmon's (2003) five categories:

- Access and motivation to participate were encouraged through information posted prior to each event in a tutor forum and podcasts explaining how to join the sessions
- Socialisation was addressed by the availability of an Elluminate® room which was open at all times for ALs to familiarise themselves with the facility either individually or by meeting others
- Information exchange was addressed by the topic of the training session itself and collaboration achieved by interaction between the session participants and by subsequent discussions both synchronous and asynchronous



- The development element is achieved when the AL delivers an online session to learners and which has also been influenced by the content of the training undertaken.

Moving staff development online gave ALs not only more flexibility but also meant that a wider programme consisting of a wide variety of workshops could be offered.

### Programme

The programme provided flexible interaction and allowed for focusing on workplace practices and enabling the sharing of knowledge (Wilson and Stacey, 2004).

The following sessions were offered:

Online only:

- Exploring Tutorhome (the VLE site which stores all necessary information for ALs)
- Dealing with students with mental health issues
- Technical and pedagogical training on the use of the system (5 different sessions)
- Challenges and opportunities of tutoring offender learners
- Dealing with young (18-25) students.

Face-to-face and online (remote access):

- Application process for a new module
- Handling expectations and conflicts
- Appraisal and career development
- Ethics on social networking
- SocialLearn (defined by the project team as ‘a cross-University project to combine the best of social web technologies with those of online social learning’; see websites).

A total of 132 Associate Lecturers (ALs) attended at least one session online or a dual medium event. In addition, a recording of each online session was provided. It is, at present, difficult to ascertain how many ALs watched the recordings. Anecdotally, we have heard that ALs still refer back to the recordings when they feel the need.

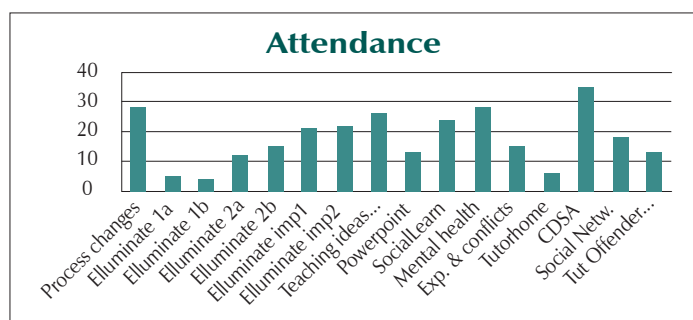


Figure 1 Attendance at each event

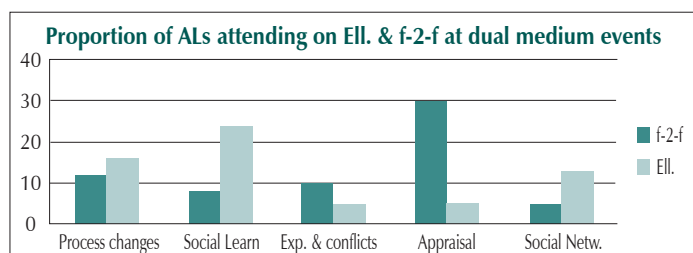


Figure 2 Attendance at dual meeting events

### Feedback

Feedback was sought after each session through an e-form sent shortly after each event. Participants were asked to rate sessions and to offer open comments. Allowing more time for participants to reflect on the session before providing the feedback ensured an excellent return rate with extensive comments and an opportunity to reflect on the session.

Most participants conveyed positive feedback on each session and were grateful to have been given the opportunity to attend. Participants appreciated the opportunity to discuss various issues with other ALs. Interactive sessions with plenty of opportunities for questions and discussions were preferred. A suggestion was made to have podcasts followed by a Q&A forum for each session with high presentation content (such as supporting students with mental health issues). Forums allow deep learning through active participation (Marton, 1984). Reflection enhances this process and the interaction allows participants to continue working together.

In addition, at the end of the programme all OUNW-based ALs were sent a questionnaire to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme. The feedback was essential to ensure that we delivered the most effective sessions possible in the future, not only at local level but also across the university. 250 Associate Lecturers responded.

In particular we asked:

- Which medium was preferred?
- What prompted participants to choose an online session as an option?
- What prompted participants to choose face to face as an option?
- Why they did not attend or watch any generic Staff Development session (if appropriate)?

The responses regarding the preference for one medium over another confirmed our assumptions. Currently, there is a slight preference for face-to-face events (51%). 28% preferred online and 21% had no preference, and the main reason given is to socialise. ALs value meeting colleagues to break down the isolation they often feel. It would seem to suggest that the topic offered is of secondary importance. This is not, however, borne by the feedback given on individual sessions where ALs can be critical if the content of the session did not meet their expectations. Therefore, when moving to online staff development training, the design of content needs to be considered carefully and ways of hooking participants need to be found.

Proximity to regional centre	22.8%	29
To socialise	64.6%	82
Not confident in using Elluminate	21.3%	27
No Elluminate alternative offered	9.4%	12
Topic	33.1%	42
To combine with other meetings (e.g. support sessions, meeting with staff tutor/regional manager)	30.7%	39
Technical issues	3.1%	4
Other		31

Table 1 Reasons given for preferring face to face

Other reasons were :

- To see colleagues in person, to network with colleagues from other faculties
- better experience
- better interaction
- better for team building, poor sound quality on Elluminate® at times
- putting names to faces, better when dealing with a new topic.

However, a large number (28%) said they preferred attending over Elluminate® with 21% stating that they had no preference. We can assume that this is probably linked to their availability. They found both media fit for delivering professional development.

No travel	54.3%	63
Topic	12.9%	15
Time of day	38.8%	45
Day of the week	19.0%	22
Saves time	51.7%	60
No face-to-face alternative offered	27.6%	32
Family commitments	23.3%	27
Ideal opportunity to practise Elluminate	35.3%	41
Other (please specify)		21

Table 2 Reasons given for preferring Elluminate®

Other reasons included :

- Regional centre is a difficult place to get to particularly in the evening
- more accessible
- fewer travel expenses
- still retains the air of OU professionalism and you have contact with other tutors.

The main reason given for not engaging with professional development is lack of time. As noted above, OU ALs are often employed by other institutions where they receive PD. It was interesting to note for the organising group that, despite several lines of online communications being explored, the information is still not reaching all ALs. This is particularly important as it is an obstacle to reaching the 'late majority' or 'laggards' (Rogers, 2003).

I was not aware they were offered	17.8%	23
I realised too late that they were offered	15.5%	20
Lack of time	55.0%	71
Not interested in topics	13.2%	17
Receiving professional development in other job(s)	36.4%	47
Cannot get to regional centre and not confident in using Elluminate	16.3%	21
Forgot to watch recording	2.3%	3
Was not aware that recording existed	31.8%	50
Other		63

Table 3 Reasons for not engaging in PD (either by attending live sessions or by watching recordings)

Other reasons included: personal reasons, unexpected changes in programme, not enough notice, 'not relevant to my teaching', heavy OU workload, some topics already presented in faculty-specific event.

### Outcomes and lessons learned (from this and subsequent programmes)

- With more online sessions offered, ALs who live outside the OUNW's boundaries can attend sessions. This increases attendance, leading to more interactive sessions.
- The programme offered seems to address ALs' needs as feedback is generally very positive.
- The Blackboard Collaborate® training, technical as well as pedagogical, means that ALs are now able to participate fully in Professional Development activities remotely and might explore using the system for supporting their students either through scheduled sessions or ad hoc contact.
- The forum we use to support the professional development activities is essential to ensure that the session is not an isolated event and that the participants engage more deeply with the topic. However, it needs the presence of a moderator/facilitator to keep the discussion active and fruitful. This could be an expert on the subject or skilled forum facilitator. It is therefore useful to include forum moderation in the presenter's contract and to make participants aware of its existence.
- For dual attendance events, it is essential to have an expert Blackboard Collaborate® user to manage the technical running of the event.
- Although we saw an increase in attendance of over 50% of ALs attending events either generic or subject specific (the latter beyond the scope of this article) in the first year of this programme, it is difficult to draw any conclusion as to whether more ALs attended Staff Development events thanks to the use of a web conferencing programme. There are too many variables.
- It is difficult to assess whether we managed to build a community of practice, but having offered more platforms to participate has given ALs more opportunities to attend events and meet with colleagues (even if only remotely) including some members of units based in Milton Keynes.
- We seem to have reached our aim to break down isolation. In a location where ALs are geographically dispersed, we have received many messages thanking us for having made it possible for them to access sessions. Many ALs have competing demands on their time and the possibility of shorter more frequent sessions from home has been appreciated.
- We have much evidence that participants learn new tips and skills when attending a session on Blackboard Collaborate® and this not only when attending specific training sessions. ALs experience the session as a student which makes them more aware of students' needs. It is particularly interesting for ALs to attend the sessions as participants rather than moderators as this limits their privileges.
- Sharing good practice occurs through pedagogical Blackboard Collaborate® training sessions and with ALs running individual sessions.

- The recording of sessions is invaluable, not only to cater for busy schedules but also as a resource. The issue we still have to resolve is to develop a catalogue or repository of available recordings. We would also need to add a summary of the follow-up discussions on the forum to present a complete learning experience.

## Conclusion

When the practice of educational development moves from face to face to online, there are several significant changes. In practical terms there is greater flexibility in scheduling. Sessions can be repeated more easily (often at a lower cost to the provider) and at a variety of times to accommodate more participants. Consequently, the overall uptake will be higher. However, the principal change is to the character and impact of the training. Not only does the move online promote participation but it is pedagogically appropriate. ALs' confidence and competence to support learners in the online classroom will be greatly enhanced if the training itself has been delivered in the same mode. Experiencing the participant role is an effective way of understanding the students' situation. Furthermore, the use of forums before and especially after the session promotes, through its reflective elements, a deep approach (Moon, 2005) because the ALs do not just participate as recipient consumers.

As a distance teaching institution, we need to offer maximum opportunities for ALs to access relevant professional development. Not only does synchronous online software provide the technical capability for delivering a comprehensive programme of events, but it also addresses the need for specific training in synchronous online teaching by the use of the same medium used to tutor students. ALs thus built confidence in using the system while receiving relevant development. However, as shown by the responses to our survey, face-to-face meetings must not be dispensed with altogether. These sessions allow for more networking, social contact and the building of a community of practice, all essential for ALs who work in isolation. Online communication is still new for many people and not yet fully integrated in everybody's lives. Our programme is designed to meet the professional development needs of both the enthusiastic and reluctant adopters of online teaching and learning. It is our belief that these new models for teaching and learning must primarily be employed in the service of a more effective learning experience for students. Accordingly, our principal aim has been to support ALs to become and feel confident in applying and adapting their existing skills in the online environment. In this sense we take a 'social determinism' view (Weller, 2010) in that the training must be guided by the teaching and learning needs of facilitators (and ultimately their students).

Both educational developers and ALs have limited time for maintaining contact and addressing any issues arising from a training event. The establishment of staff development forums is a valuable mechanism which maximises deep learning because ALs do not just take part as peripheral learners. Moreover, through forums, trainers and participants can continue a dialogue.

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## Websites

SocialLearn: <http://kmi.open.ac.uk/projects/name/sociallearn>

**Annie Eardley** (a.f.eardley@open.ac.uk) is a Senior Lecturer and Staff Tutor and **Elke St John** (e.stjohn@open.ac.uk) is an Associate Lecturer, at the Open University, in the Faculty of Education and Language Studies. The Open University in the North West is one of 13 UK centres responsible for the local delivery of modules (allocation of students to groups, organisation of tutorial venues, appointment of Associate Lecturers etc.).

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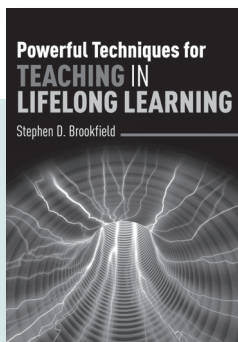
Any opinions expressed are those of the authors.

# Book Review

## Powerful Techniques for Teaching in Lifelong Learning

Stephen D. Brookfield

2013, Open University Press



I was given this book to review when I was in transition professionally from teaching community education to undergraduates to a post in educational development. As an adult educator, I was familiar with Brookfield's work, but it was interesting to read the book from the perspective of a new educational developer, beginning to work with academic staff.

The focus of this book is power in adult teaching. Brookfield addresses three aspects: the dynamics of power in classrooms of adult students, the empowerment of students, and how to encourage students to think critically about dominant ideology. The book is described by the author as a workbook to accompany his earlier theoretical examination of power (Brookfield, 2004), and it certainly could be used in that way. Each chapter provides an introduction to theory, but moves quickly to practical activities that can be used in the classroom.

One of the things I liked about this book is that it challenges the reader

to think more critically about some of the 'givens' of adult education. For example, in a chapter on using discussion-based teaching to change the balance of power in the classroom (a method favoured by many adult educators), Brookfield points out that the power of the teacher remains present even in discussion. He also reminds us that in discussion, power dynamics within the student group can become apparent, with some participants dominating while others remain silent. Brookfield does not dismiss discussion as an appropriate tool for teaching adults. Instead, he presents several ways to use discussion both to support student learning and to create a more democratic learning process.

The book is written in a very engaging style. The author avoids the use of jargon or technical language without over-simplifying challenging ideas. Each chapter includes personal accounts of the author's experiences of teaching, including lectures and workshops that did not go as well

as they might. The result is that the reader feels that they are learning from a trusted colleague who understands their concerns about teaching adults.

In my work context I am not required to teach about power and dominant ideologies. However, I did find the many detailed descriptions of practical ways to address power in the classroom very useful. They are easy to understand, and I could see how they might work in my own teaching. For a workshop I was planning at the time of reading this book, I adapted some of the suggested activities, including the use of the Critical Incident Questionnaire that provided me with very useful feedback on the session.

I enjoyed this book, but would warn readers to expect mixed feelings as they engage with the writer's personal stories. Stephen Brookfield demonstrates a commitment to teaching, as well as considerable skill and expertise that left me feeling I have a lot to learn. However, I was inspired too, and would recommend this book as a useful guide for anyone working with adults in classrooms.

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**Janis McIntyre** is an Educational Developer at the University of Liverpool.

A SEDA Online Publication

## 53 Powerful Ideas Every Teacher Should Know About

**Professor Graham Gibbs**



Based on the rationale that 'thinking about teaching' is at least as important as teaching methods, Professor Graham Gibbs is publishing one 'powerful idea' a week through the Publications pages of the SEDA website. Comment, response and debate will be featured in the SEDA blog.

## 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.

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