Educational Developments

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Developing Skills, Abilities or Capabilities:
Implications for Educational Developers

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Introduction

There is a powerful demand for today's teachers to develop and embed in their courses what are variously called key skills, or core skills, or personal and professional capabilities, or some such title. Notice, please, that I deliberately included that word "develop" in my opening sentence. For I hold the view that it is insufficient to merely assess the exercise of such skills and abilities, however demanding that challenge is in itself for teachers and learners. In addition, our responsibility as teachers in this area is to establish the conditions in which such capability will be purposefully and effectively nurtured.

Conferences and workshops abound in success stories told by those who have tackled this challenge successfully, and whose exploits the rest of us would love to emulate. In most of these accounts, the Kolb Cycle – in a simplified form – and the concept of being a reflective practitioner, tend to figure strongly. In one way or another, it seems that students in the more noteworthy innovations devote a fair amount of time and effort to standing back from the exercise of the abilities. They ponder on what these abilities entail and how their performance can be enhanced – a process which is currently and fashionably called "reflection". Nevertheless, it often seems that the use of the word is more firmly established in academia than its meaning and demands.

I have increasingly encountered an alternative school of experience. In general academic company, if I merely mention informally that a lot of us are having difficulties with teaching and assessing skills and abilities and with getting our students to reflect to good effect, then some heads nod, and agreeing murmurs tend to grow in volume. It appears to me that there are a lot of tertiary teachers out there who would welcome effective assistance, to help them to achieve what is expected of them in this aspect of educational development.

So what do educational developers have to offer them? Often not enough, I suggest. And so in this short note, I hope to look at the implications for us, as educational developers, of the problems in current practice and pedagogy, as many of our colleagues perceive them. I have five such problems currently in mind, all taken from recent conversations with sincere but so far relatively ineffective practitioners in skills development. Merely identifying the problems, and thinking about them as I have assembled this note in response to a request from James Wisdom, has helped me to see ways in which my own practice and pedagogy can be sharpened – and become more effective. I hope that confronting these problems positively may similarly lead to five sensible and practicable implications for other educational developers, and for teachers.

For in all of this I see, and seek, strong parallels between the work of an educational developer with university teachers, and the work of these same teachers with their students. Both situations concern the development of ability or capability or skill.

Problem 1: Many students and some teachers don't really understand what we mean by reflection; so naturally they cannot reflect to good effect

Is there not an obvious implication here? I suggest that we can all become a lot more helpful, and also pedagogically more precise, if we distinguish first of all between analytical and evaluative reflection. We can even make that distinction clearer to ourselves if we think in terms of coaxing, as well as facilitating, our learners to analyse their processes and to evaluate their performances. Better still, we can devise specific activities – of two distinct types. In one form of activity we should ask students, and help them to unearth, how they actually carry out those tasks which feature frequently on their schedules, and which they and we deem of importance. In the second form, we can urge them and help them to deal with a different question - how well they can do whatever it is, or did it last time, or want to be able to do it next time.

The practical implication for educational developers is to persuade ourselves and our teaching colleagues to use vocabulary which is immediately meaningful to learners, and to express it as questions which lead naturally into useful and worthwhile responses. We could well shape up a range of generic activities framed around such questions, which our colleagues could pick up and run with to good effect.

I will try to give an example of a generic format. In the level 3 year of the Ordinary BA in Social Sciences in the University of the Highlands and Islands Millennium Institute (UHIMI), we show the students how objective and systematic evaluation should contain three features. These are a clear statement of the standards against which judgements are to be made; a description in similar terms of that which is being judged; and a process, applicable in general terms and not tailor-made for a specific case, by which performance is compared with standards and a judgement reached.

We use this approach – *and* format - in assisting the students to be generally self-evaluative, *and* to judge the value of the papers which they find on the Internet, *and* to make judgements and provide feedback to their peers when projects are presented, and so on. The generic format is:

1. What are the standards you will use in making this judgement?

2. What is your description, in similar terms, of whatever you are judging?

3. What is the process by which you compare performance with standards – and what judgement does that lead you to make?

Problem 2: Most teachers don't appreciate that reflecting and generalising are less than half the story of using the Kolb Cycle to good effect

Think of someone who begins at the bottom of the Cycle (Figure 1 below) by being given what has seemed to others a good approach – and is then asked to test out this approach. The crucial stage in achieving subsequent development is the one which Kolb called "Active Experimentation". This occurs when we consciously plan to test out a method or approach, and to note the outcomes of that experiment within our next experience. For if we do that rigor-
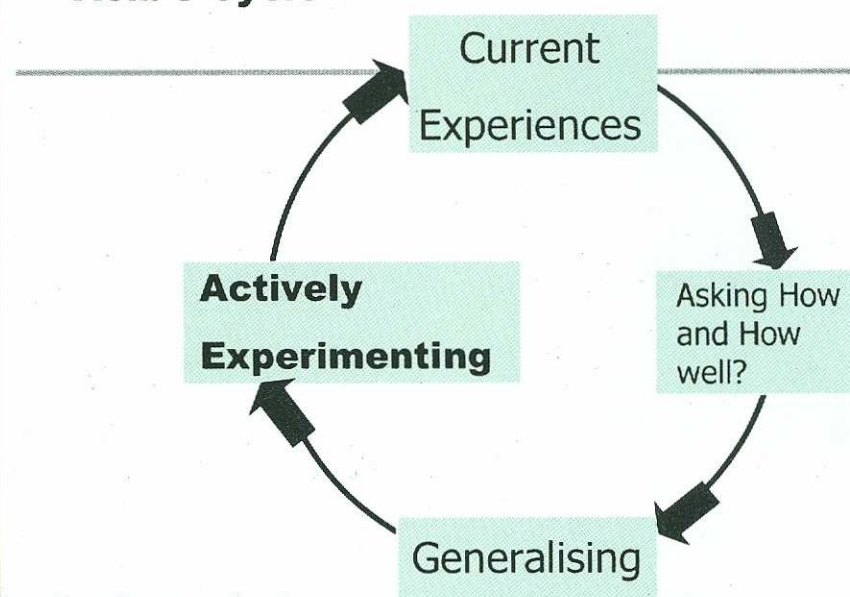
Kolb's Cycle

Figure 1: Kolb's Cycle

ously, we will then be able to reflect to good effect on the modifications which may be needed in our generalisations.

The same is true, of course, even and especially when the learner begins from an experience upon which they have already reflected, by asking "How did I do that? And also perhaps "How can I do things like that better next time?" And then formulating answers in which they are confident. Here again there is scope and potential for active experimentation – in which the clutch of questions now to be asked comprise:

- How will I test out the validity and effectiveness of this advice to myself?

- How can I ingather data so that I am well equipped to review my generalised approach?

- How will I decide if there is scope for improvement?

- How will I then test this out again?

The practical implication for the educational developers of the need for active experimentation, is twofold. First, we must help our teaching colleagues, in their own development and that of their students, to see the need to put as much emphasis on active experimentation as they do upon reflection. Second, we should suggest formats and descriptions of distinct activities to that end, which will ring bells with them and with their students, and so will be put to good use. In this way, we can help them all to move to situations in which the learners will actively plan to devote part of their efforts to testing out their generalisations in the next experiences. If so, they will in due course reflect usefully on the outcomes of that conscious testing, as they review their earlier generalisations about how to carry out tasks which call for the skill or ability in question.

In UHIMI we have an academic demand in addition to the normal expectation that passes will be obtained in the framework of modules. We look for students to demonstrate, in the everyday context of their other studies and work, adequate performance in respect of 24 Personal and Professional Capabilities (PPCs). Some of these, like the capability to resolve difficulties in groups of which the student is a member, cannot be assessed in the usual way; for we can hardly arrange that there will be problems in the group next Wednesday, which it will be for student X to resolve. All PPCs, it seems to us, should be described in terms of a progression, through levels which expect more of a learner in the third year of study than in the first. The capability to empathise with the values of others, and take account of that in dealings with them and with their work, is surely more sophisticated at level 3 than level 1? And so it behoves us to find ways to assist students with that progression, for which they, of course, must take a share of responsibility. The challenge to enrich our scheme to encompass such levels still engages us actively – but we will resolve it, I am sure.
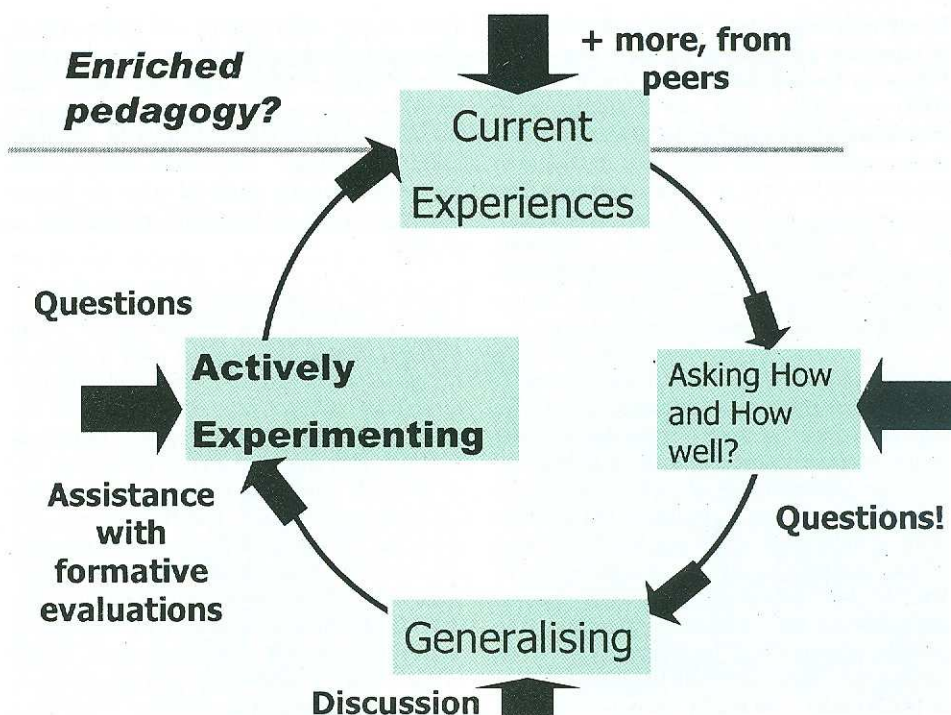

Figure 2: A More Developed Pedagogy?

Problem 3: Being a reflective practitioner is too often portrayed as a solitary and private activity

The Kolb Cycle contains four elements which seem to describe what an individual does. That is fair enough. But it seems to be taken to imply that a reflective practitioner should be doing these things in isolation, as a highly personal and private process. I see no grounds for that assumption. As an individual who is still, I hope, a learner, I know that my own development is enriched by the involvement of other learners at every stage in *my* cycling; and so I try to arrange similar interactions for my students. (See Figure 2 above.)

If I am reflecting on *my* experiences, and seeking to make generalisations from them, then I am certainly enriched if I also have access to the relevant experiences of others. I often find this extremely useful. I may sometimes decide that these were experiences beyond my talents or the demands of my situation; or I may find them additional and relevant food for thought; or even in their diversity, I may find them helpful in pointing contrasts.

When I go on to reflect about How things can best be done, and How Well I am doing them, I have to self-question – which is a difficult art for me to practice when I am so near to my own behaviour. Some of the most useful questions in *my* processes of reflection have been pointed and clear enquiries which brought me up in my tracks, and pushed me to think again – and more deeply and widely.

When I am generalising, the lapsed engineer in me is loath to rediscover the wheel. I like to find out what others have thought and done and

concluded, and even are currently mulling over, to see if I am maybe missing something valuable. At the end of the day, I may reject much of this, and certainly will formulate my own generalisation in my own words; but *my* thinking will have been enriched by these contacts with the thinking of others.

When I plan to actively experiment, then I struggle against two limitations. I haven't done all that much of this kind of thing, so I welcome thoughts and suggestions from others. And, because I am so near to my personal plan, I am likely to miss my untested assumptions and oversimplifications – which is where the comments, suggestions and questions of others can be of use *to me*.

The implications of all of this, I submit, are that if this is so for me as an individual learner, will it not also be true for some of those with whom I work in the course of educational development – *and* for their students – all of whose experiences we therefore need to plan and structure accordingly?

Problem 4: We often do not distinguish to good effect between embedding skills and giving them attention separately.

It has long been my contention that little progress will be made in developing, for example, skills of communication - other than in contexts where the skills development is embedded in situations where people wish to communicate effectively and to be the recipients of effective communication. Good skills development, for me, is embedded in a relevant context. But that commendable embedding can bring almost insuperable problems in its wake.

In my early experiences with the development of capability, way back in the early days of the Education for Capability Movement, it was the ability to problem solve and to design, in an engineering sense, which most concerned me. I then struggled to little effect with my desire to persuade my students to think about how they were designing, and how well they were designing, in the immediate context of a motivating design task. They did not wish to think about designing in general; they wanted to go on thinking about this particular design.

In this, and other contexts, I have found it much more effective to persuade learners to step back, however briefly, from the particular demands of the immediate situation and to consider the general family of tasks of which the immediate one is but an example. In that statement, I must admit that "persuade" has often meant "compel through the structuring of the activity". John Mason set this kind of thing up splendidly in the wonderful group work on problem solving which he designed many years ago for the Open University foundation course in Mathematics. He taught tutors to switch the attention of the learners back and forward from "Generalising" to "Specialising." [All of us, whether mathematicians or not, can learn a great deal – pedagogically – from his delightful booklet Learning and Doing Mathematics, which should still be around in many OU libraries if you wish to dip into it.]

In my own small way, I have had good returns from asking, at the close of a task or in a mid-task break, for learners to take time to write advice to themselves about how to proceed next time – with the clear understanding that they would subsequently be called upon to review and account for the realism, effectiveness and validity of that advice.

I suppose I am suggesting bluntly that there is an implication from the failures to generalise which is often associated with embedded training, and from the tendency to pipe dream and fail to keep feet firmly on the ground which are associated with separate training for skills. The implication is that these dangers can be avoided if we consciously alternate between the general and the particular – as indeed Kolb and Mason are advising us.

Problem 5: Maybe we have ourselves not learnt enough from Vygotsky about the potential to help our students, and teacher colleagues, out into their Zones of Proximal Development?

Vygotsky suffers from being paraphrased and misquoted, usually by people like me who are unable to study his thinking in the original Russian. I hope I will not lay myself open to the same criticism, if I summarise that part of his work on which I tend to depend in terms of two concepts.

The first of these is that a child learner (for it was of children that he wrote) will often have the inherent ability to do better than in responding to a traditional test. The young learner may show deeper understanding and wider ranging ability, if assisted by questions and prompts (not spoonfeeding!) which bring out more than would be volunteered in an isolated response to the test question. That prompting Vygotsky called "scaffolding." The second concept is that the further learning displayed takes the learner into their "Zone of Proximal Development" – or ZPD.

During the past academic year in particular, I have taken Vygotskian practice almost to an extreme, in applying it to the adult learning in my classes which focuses on the development of capabilities. Once I have established what appears to me to be a relationship with individuals in which they trust me, and to accept that my motive is to assist them to be the best that they can be, I begin to push. I scaffold them to discover the full extent of their zones of proximal development. I do this as they write their personal reflective learning journals, focused on the development of abilities which they have chosen as meriting attention. I offer comment, usually in the form of increasingly probing questions which they might usefully consider – without a hint to them (or to me in my framing of the questions) of what their answers might be. This year, with a growing confidence in the efficacy of this practice, I have coaxed and even goaded with my questions, pushing the students to think more rigorously, more deeply – and more purposefully. The end result, in terms of the evidenced claims for capability development made at the end of the semester for consideration by assessors, has been a noteworthy improvement on previous (fairly successful) years.

Another example. In the past few months, in a programme designed to assist experienced university teachers in one UK university to produce a reflective account of their capabilities for the ILT fast-track, I have had moderate success in attracting participants and in terms of applications going forward and being accredited. In the two final workshops, however, I have offered an optional additional practical session in a computer lab. There the participants are given the chance to begin to work on their draft application for an hour or so, while seeking and being offered advice from me. The number of draft applications then emerging, and their quality, both represent a marked improvement. I put this down to our quickly establishing a trusting relationship which can endure the impact of a Vygotskian tutorial style, which digs deeply and which forcefully seeks to help participants to unearth that which they have been overlooking or discounting. This is not instruction. I do not provide anything except prompts. I am scaffolding their reflective development, into *their* ZPDs.

The implication of this, for me, is that I have been prompted to reconsider the potential of such an aggressive and searching style of tutorial comment. In many cases, it is leading UHIMI students to feel justified to make powerful and persuasively evidenced claims to their assessors with regard to Damascus Road developments in respect of their development under various PPCs.

A closing and conscience stricken thought

I return to the mention which I made in my opening remarks, about the success stories which are richly in evidence at conferences and workshops on core skills and the development of abilities.

I must admit that I tend to listen to these with admiration, but to see them as particular accounts, considering them in terms of what they might offer if I pillage, transfer or copy. But should I not be practising what I preach?

- Should I not be looking for the **generalisations** which I can draw from several of them, for my practice both as a developer of teachers and of students?

- Should I not be looking to see what attention they devote to **active experimentation** and its findings, and learning from that?

- Should I not be examining them for the evidence they provide of the effectiveness, or otherwise, of designing and using activities which make it clear to learners **what is expected** of them when they "reflect"?

- Should I not be studying the contribution which interactions with the questions, experiences and ideas of **others** make to the effectiveness of individual reflections?

- Should I not keenly enquire about the ways in which attention is given to the generalising as well as to progress with particular tasks, within situations in which skills training is, or is not, **embedded**?

- Should I not examine the way the tutors facilitate skills development, and in particular if and how they coax learners out into their **zones of proximal development**?

These, in all honesty, are questions which the writing of this note has prompted me, reflectively, to ask of myself. Should I be doing a bit more practising what I preach, in this developing of abilities business?

What about you, then? Should you be asking some of these questions of yourself, too?

Biography

John Cowan retired as Scottish Director of the Open University four years ago. He now teaches in Heriot-Watt University and the University of the Highlands and Islands Millennium Institute, advises at home and abroad when departments or schools decide to opt for problem-based learning or self-assessment, audits with QAA, and is a visiting professor at several British universities.

He will be delighted to receive comments on, or even disagreement with, what he has written here, at: John.Cowan@hw.ac.uk

Editorial

At a recent editorial meeting James Wisdom reminded me that there are two types of editorial. The simple type is a trot through the contents of the Issue, attempting to make connections and draw out themes. The more ambitious type is a soapbox for a current enthusiasm (or even a pulpit for a homily). Well, it has been a long academic year and I cannot muster the energy to step onto a soapbox (let alone climb a pulpit) so I am taking the easy way out.

Maybe it's just that each year we are a year older and less able to cope, but each year does seem more frenetic than the last in HE, or at least it does at the centre of HE where staff and educational developers work. (If one more taxi driver asks if I am holiday now I will not be held responsible for my actions!) Far from being an ivory tower or dreaming spire, university life seems more like a roller coaster - we have no sooner climbed one peak than we are rushing on to the next. My recent peaks would include Learning and Teaching Strategies, Human Resource Strategies, and RAE submissions. The ones ahead include widening participation, embedding key skills, and learning technologies. Some of us are feeling queasy - how can we gather our thoughts while on a roller coaster?

One answer is reading *Educational Developments*. It was with great expectations that I turned to John Cowan's lead article and I was not disappointed. His "Becoming an Innovative University Teacher" (1998 SRHE/OUP) clarified a lot for me about reflection in learning. He does it again here, elaborating and further developing the well-known Kolb cycle. This gem repays re-reading. Perhaps what makes his writing so engaging is the clear reflection it illustrates.

Another answer is attending SEDA events and the recent Summer School gets a mention and a picture (there will be a longer diary in the next issue). The comments reproduced here are from the participants, extracted from post-its, of course. We had a good mix of people and activities, some excellent discussions, and a good time. One of the sessions at the Summer School, led by Ranald Macdonald, discussed running workshops successfully. We came away with a long list of good ideas. It was timely, then, to have David Baume's *Dialogues* piece on workshops with more good ideas for good practice.

Future SEDA events advertised in this issue are the Manchester November conference, a pre-conference workshop on Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Networking the Networks in October, and Supporting and Evaluating Change in April 2002. There are three annual Fellowship Support Days for those thinking about, or in the process of, compiling a portfolio. For readers who have not thought of a SEDA Fellowship or Associate Fellowship, have a look at the information on page 18 - this is an opportunity to reflect, big time.

Most of the contents of this issue develop previous themes, such as learning technology. In the fourth part of our series A Developer's Guide to Major National Initiatives, Sarah Porter describes Managed Learning Environments, which have been prominent recently (page 10). (Their little sisters Virtual Learning Environments were reviewed in Issue 1.1.) This is a good introduction to the terminology, concepts and initiatives surrounding this complex software that offers a range of facilities for online teaching and learning. But will the users use it? Kerry Shephard and Denis Wong discuss the problems of students and staff when using learning technology and issues in supporting them (page 6). Users need resourcefulness and emotional competences to persevere with technology, and these are sometimes in short supply. We have to find ways of raising their levels and of preventing technology from draining them away. A different problem with technology is that some students have no problems using the Internet, but for plagiarism rather than learning. One response to this, at least in the short term, is to fight technology with technology. Graham Alsop and Chris Topsett review the Internet tools available to assessors to detect and confirm plagiarism (page 15).

The learning technologies theme is continued with Paul Bailey's description of the new Embedding Learning Technologies Award (page 24), which was recently recognised under the SEDA Professional Development Accreditation framework. The first handful of universities is currently applying for recognition under this scheme. They will be able to award the staff on their learning technology programmes a PDHE-ELT – Professional Development in HE Embedding Learning Technology. More news about the SEDA Accreditation Framework is on page 18.

Continuing the theme of Problem Based Learning from the lead article of the last issue, Jill Armstrong describes the initiatives in PBL being taken by the Generic Centre of the Learning and Teaching Support Network, including a PBL website.

There are other reports to keep us up to date. On the international scene there is a report from the annual council meeting of the International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED). On the national scene there is a report of the LTSN Generic Centre / ILT Meeting that was held in three locations recently, on Enhancing Continuing Professional Development. William Locke of Universities UK keeps us informed about how it is responding to the current national agenda including student progress files, widening participation, and employability. The four successful bids for SEDA Small Grants are described on page 21.

Continuing the theme of handling the numbers in assessment, Mike Brough and I address some issues that occurred to us in examiners' meetings, as we write In Praise of Medians. It is not just medians that concern us, but some principles to keep in mind when we represent outcomes as numerical marks, combine marks or adjust marks. Some problems could be avoided by better assessment methods and by detailed student records, but in practice we often use and manipulate student percentage marks. We suggest some good practice. So I got to stand on a soapbox after all!

Stephen Bostock
Educational Developments Editorial Committee

Learning Technologies Need Resourceful Tutors and Students

Kerry Shephard, Learning Technologies Co-ordinator, Centre for Learning and Teaching
Denis Wong, Advice and Training Manager, Computing Services
University of Southampton

To enrol on a University of Southampton Blackboard on-line course, students are given the following instruction.

"This Course requires an enrollment access code from the Instructor. Enter the enrollment access code and click ok to enroll."

There is no 'OK' button on the page nor, of course, on anyone's keyboard. Clicking the keyboard's 'Return' doesn't work. What it actually wants students to do is to click on the 'submit' button that is on the page. Experienced educational developers (indeed any experienced computer user) will not have needed to be told that. This is not an initiative test (along the lines of; if they cannot work that one out they would probably not have benefited from the course anyhow!). It is not part of a cleverly structured plot to pervert our widening participation plans (but it could contribute to that). It is a simple mistake, a bug or a glitch. It is also a classic and effective Gumption Trap.

Here are some more: learning resources that work differently (or not at all) when used from different locations; passwords that are case sensitive; registration forms that do not accept partial completion, even though some of the questions are unanswerable; attachments that fail to get through mail list servers, with no notification to the sender; web pages that require plug-ins; systems that fail due to overload or other circumstances out of the user's control. The list is very long.

Gumption, and its derivative the Gumption Trap, were 'inventions' of Robert Pirsig (Pirsig, 1974), although UK readers may remember a particularly effective household cleaner with the same name that may well predate Pirsig, and there is a perfectly reasonable definition in my Pocket English Dictionary; resourcefulness. Pirsig described an individual's resourcefulness as a finite store of Gumption. "If you're going to repair a motorcycle, an adequate supply of Gumption is the first and most important tool. If you haven't got that you might as well gather up all the other tools and put them away, because they won't do you any good." An individual's store of Gumption can be topped up by positive and stimulating feedback and all manner of pleasant experiences. Stores of Gumption may also be depleted by negative experiences. Badly designed structures, tools and systems on motorcycles definitely fall into the category of Gumption Trap. This article is not about motorcycles, but then neither was Pirsig's book.

There is little doubt that learners' capacity for enthusiastic enquiry is a finite resource. We maintain that many aspects and attributes of learning technologies are Gumption Traps that deplete this resource. Blackboard, and other developers of learning technologies, do not hide their Gumption Traps. Access to all of them, so far discovered, is easily obtained though company web-sites and 'communities of users'. Typing 'problems' into search facilities will generally reveal many examples of things that do not work. Each example represents a challenge for the learning technologist eager to share their experience, even solutions, with the wider academic community. For the student, particularly the student new to technology, new to distance learning, or new to higher education, each 'problem' represents wasted time and lost Gumption. Even worse is the loss of Gumption suffered by an academic new to learning technologies; as then the loss of resourcefulness translates into loss of enthusiasm for using technology to support learning, not just for an individual but for cohorts of students for years to come.

To further examine the dilemma that faces us it is necessary to say that Blackboard is almost certainly one of the best learning technologies. It is easy to use and suitable for beginners. Blackboard's simplicity is often cited by hardened learning technologists as a weakness. Just imagine how many Gumption Traps the others have! We do not need to; we have experienced many of them. Our stores of Gumption are just fine, but then we are interested in the development of learning technologies. We do not have to use them as tools for learning.

So what is the point in all of this? Surely we have to accept that technology is always developing and will never be perfect? Surely we realise that these learning resources cannot be right for all, given the wide range of experience and expertise that learners have? Even old-fashioned resources had their problems; libraries close and books go missing. We probably have to accept all of these, up to a point. Indeed we probably have, almost up to the point of crisis. Many educational developers, as with many subject-based academics, have turned away from the use of many learning technologies in an effort to preserve their finite stores of Gumption, or to direct their Gumption to where it will do most good. We should seek to identify the consequences of this acceptance and attempt to develop strategies that will at least address the problems. Here are some approaches in various stages of analysis.

Focus on processes; these are quality issues that should be addressed by quality assurance processes

If a learning resource doesn't work, or if it confuses all but the brighter or most experienced students, then it will probably influence students' attainment of a course's learning outcomes. It should be picked up by student evaluation (perception) of course quality; by tutor self-reflection on course quality; by peer review; by the external examiner; by good teamwork between academic and academic support groups. Of course, for this to work the bug, glitch or Gumption Trap has to be perceived as part of the entity that is evaluated. Often it is not. It might, for example, be a central-resource failure rather than something that relates to a specific course. Students with limited Gumption (read resourcefulness) might internalise the problem too much and consider it their fault and problem. Often the problem is a complex mismatch between the skills that students have and the skills that the learning resource needs. In some cases tutors incorrectly judge the level of IT skill necessary.

Identification is important. One of the best known analyses of learning technologies contributing to student's loss of resourcefulness is that of Hara and Kling (2000) in relation to distance learning courses. Of course the problems are generally more severe when the only possible link between learner and tutor is on-line. These authors describe students' distress with a web-based distance education course and suggest that many problems are a by-product of technical difficulties and communication breakdowns. They hope that their study will "enhance understanding of the instructional design issues, instructor and student preparation, and communication practices that are needed to improve web-based distance education courses". The article certainly focuses attention on the scale of the problems involved and identifies the dilemma that solutions will only follow recognition of the problems. So can QA aid us in bridging this 'Gumption gap'?

The UK's Quality Assurance Agency identifies the following guideline for suppliers of distance learning. "Prior to offering programmes of study by distance learning, an institution should explicitly design and test its system for administering and teaching students at a distance and plan for contingencies in order to meet its stated

aims in terms of academic quality and standards" (QAA, 2000). 'Design and test' is the key term here and, arguably, should apply to any use of learning technologies. The issues, however, are highly complex. Most applications of learning technologies involve pilot projects as part of a 'test'. Indeed the 'design' process is generally ongoing with systems constantly evolving and being re-tested. Action-research, a mainstay of educational innovation, requires a process of continuing improvement. (We hope that our next version of Blackboard provides an OK button). In many ways, however, this process is incompatible with 'design and test'. Quality assurance processes seem, at present, unable to cope with these problems.

Many approaches to QA have been suggested. A general conclusion is that academic environments work best when free from 'checklist management' (Barnett, 1992) but Hannan and Silver (2000) identify the need to tread carefully between the two extreme options of 'diktat' and anarchy. The balance is often between sufficient QA to ensure 'fitness for purpose', yet not so much that it stifles innovation. Newby (1999) emphasises the difference between externally-driven QA (particularly processes that emphasise achievement of threshold standards) and internally-driven QA; internal to the management and delivery of learning and teaching. The latter can be based on reflective practice, aim for continuing improvement and need not be designed to satisfy external expectations. It works primarily at the level of the individual. Newby argues that the approach is entirely consistent with Total Quality Management whose philosophy "does not see quality as a product but as a process in which the drive is to do better than before". We think that Pirsig would approve. TQM has been applied in higher education (finding significant cultural barriers) but we are not familiar with examples of where it has been applied specifically to the use of learning technologies.

Focus on staff; matching academic support to the needs of tutors

Increasingly, it is the *relationship* between computer user and computer support-staff that is crucial. This is a difficult relationship. For example, having acquired any specialist skill, it becomes increasingly difficult to remember what it was like not to have had that skill. These memories need to be revived by tutors and by support staff.

One approach to identify the support needs of individuals is based on Goleman's concept of Emotional Competence. (Goleman, 1997). The approach emphasises the perception that interactions between learning technologies and learners, tutors or students, are not always entirely rational. Some aspects of emotional competence are considered in Table 1 (above right). This table focuses on the interactions between tutors and support-staff and, somewhat provocatively, identifies with the emotional competence of tutors.

Table 1: An Analysis of Tutor 'Emotional Competence' and the Role of Academic Support-Staff in Avoiding the Production of Gumption Traps
Based on the ideas of Goleman (1997) and Pirsig (1974)

Emotional Competence	Elements of Emotional Competence	Interactions Between Tutor and Computer Support-Staff Designed to Avoid Gumption Traps
Self Awareness	Emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment and confidence	Many novice computer users 'fear' the computer and don't try out options. When a key or a button doesn't work, for example, the confident (read resourceful) user goes in search of an alternative. Support staff have to judge the resourcefulness of the tutors in order to support them.
Self Regulation	Self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, innovation	Computer users can get angry with computing equipment and sometimes fail to manage disruptive emotions and impulses. Support staff need to recognise the signs.
Self Motivation	Achievement drive, commitment, initiative, optimism	Computing projects are easy to start, but difficult to complete. Testing and validating take a great deal of time and this may cause projects to fail. Support staff must be able to recognise levels of commitment.
Empathy and Social Competence	Social awareness, social skills	Tutors must empathise with student computer-users. So must support staff. The task is more difficult for support staff as they have to be aware of the emotional competence of students as well as that of the tutor.

Focus on students; matching the skills that learning resources need with the skills that students have

Higher education attracts a broader intake than occurred in years gone by and this trend is probably increasing as widening participation extends. Broader intakes have a wider range of skills and the needs of our 'customers' are increasingly diverse. In addition we have to accept the increasing diversity of higher education itself; not only diversity between institutions, but within them. An important attribute of this diversity is the extent to which communication and information technology (C&IT) skills are required to enable students to interact with the learning resources that support learning in each programme of study. There is no 'standard of C&IT skill' that would have generic application. Even the key skills initiative in 'Curriculum 2000' which aims to produce a recognisable skill level will leave out many mature students. Logic suggests that each 'Programme Specification' will have to address the C&IT skills level that will be necessary to enable students to succeed at each level of the programme (QAA, 1999). Students that are accepted onto the programme with less than this will require specific and targeted support. We aim for seamless integration between the IT skills of students; the diagnostic, training and support mechanisms provided to students in HE; and the requirement for IT skills inherent within the learning resources provided and used within HE - a tall order.

These issues are well understood by educational developers but rarely explicitly tackled, other than in an attempt to identify and solve particular 'computer' problems. There are exceptions. Slaouti (2001) described some "critical moments in the lifetime of a course" that involve students' frustration with learning technologies. Slaouti interprets these critical moments as part of the necessary process of "reading the signs on a distance course". Again the problems are more severe when the only possible link between learner and tutor is on-line. The issues, however, are probably of relevance wherever the learning technologies are used. McNaught, Whithear and Browning (1999), for example, identify the 'culture shock' with educational innovation that probably relates as much to implementation of innovative educational approaches (theirs was problem-based learning) as it does to the use of the learning technology integral to the innovation. Nevertheless their longitudinal study identified a consistent 20% of students who did not wish to learn in the 'new way'; preferring lectures alone. A significant finding was that students' enthusiasm for the 'computer based case study learning system' was closely related to their self-assessments of their confidence with computers. If UK higher education is to 'harness the power' of C&IT to 'deliver' widening participation and increased accessibility then we will have to pay attention to students on the periphery; not just to those whose resourcefulness is assured.

Focus on software; worldware

This article was written using a learning technology (Microsoft Word). It was sent to the editor using another (email) and its development was facilitated using several others (including Internet Explorer). Perhaps these technologies were not designed for 'learning' but they are used for

this purpose extensively. They fit into the category of Worldware (Ehrmann, 1994). Worldware also has problems, but worldware technologies have been developed over longer periods, for broader audiences and with more effective 'natural selection' processes in operation, than have most dedicated learning technologies. Worldware also generally encourages different approaches to training. Most users develop most skills by trial and error and peer-pressure to develop is extensive and highly successful. Fewer academic staff turn their backs on word processors and email than on WebCT and Blackboard but this process does need analysis so that we learn some lessons.

New types of worldware are developing with great potential to support learning and teaching. IM or 'instant messaging' supports on-line chat with distant friends or truly distributed- tutorials, depending on your perspective. Learning technologists may continue to develop specific learning technologies, along with the next generation of Gumption Traps, but they may be better advised to wait for a successful worldware to evolve. Certainly many IT-aware 16 year-olds will look with scorn on the on-line communication that they will be asked to use when they get to university in two years time, having been chatting world-wide for 4 or 5 years. At the other end of the scale mature students, many of those that benefit from widening participation programmes and many academic staff will still find their Gumption trapped by the learning technologies.

Conclusions

Resourceful students and staff overcome the gumption traps that learning technologies tend to generate, but often only the most resourceful students and staff actually succeed in using learning technologies effectively. To make full use of the learning technologies we will have to extend their applicability. The concepts of gumption, resourcefulness or emotional competence may provide a useful model for us to work with.

We need to produce learning resources that match the skills and needs of our students, but we must also develop QA processes and support mechanisms that prevent the generation of gumption traps.

Here are some key questions:

- Can we identify gumption in individuals, so that we can better diagnose their needs?

- Can we identify gumption traps, so that we can get them "designed out" of the learning process?

- Can we identify general ways of raising gumption?

- Can we take advantage of the gumption that teenagers (our future students) seem to possess?

- Are mature students more likely to suffer from lack of gumption and (if so) how can we help them?

There may be no universal answers to these questions, because successive student intakes are different and technologies move on. We must, however, regain control over a situation in which some academic staff and students are turning away from new technologies. To do so, we must look beyond the physical resource-needs of our staff and students and start to work on their gumption.

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SEDA Roll of Honour

SEDA are delighted to announce three new additions to the Roll of Honour. Individuals who have made an exceptional contribution to the work of SEDA, or to staff and educational development in general, may be awarded a place on the Roll of Honour.

The latest candidates, who were overwhelmingly agreed at the SEDA AGM in April, are:

Professor Brenda Smith (LTSN Generic Centre)

Particular mention was made of Brenda's membership of the SEDA Publications Committee and her work for them as author and editor of many SEDA papers. Also mentioned was Brenda's involvement in peer observation and development projects at her former institution, Nottingham Trent University, and the great skill and sensitivity she has displayed as a consultant.

Dr Brian Smith (University of Sussex)

Particular mention was made of Brian's membership of both the SEDA Executive Committee and SEDA Publications Committee and his role in taking SEDA through the application to become a limited company and the important task of negotiating charitable status. These developments were dependent on the particular combination of diplomacy, dedication and business awareness that he brought to them. SEDA will always be grateful to Brian for the success and handling of them.

Arnold Goldman

Particular mention was made of Arnold's role in the merger of the SRHE Staff Development Group with SCED to form SEDA, his continuing membership of the SEDA Executive Committee and the Accreditation Steering Committee, as well as his invaluable contribution both as an advisor and in co-ordinating and drafting responses to consultations and in keeping SEDA in touch with national developments. Mention was also made of Arnold's stylish socks!

Presentations of the latest Roll of Honour certificates will take place at a forthcoming SEDA event and details of those currently on the SEDA Roll of Honour can be found on the SEDA website at:

http://www.seda.demon.co.uk/roll.html

Problem Based Learning Initiatives

Jill Armstrong
**Senior Advisor, LTSN Generic Centre**

Current interest in PBL in the UK is remarkable. Disciplines that have no vocational orientation and do not have obvious access to 'every day problems' within their subject have begun to explore the potential in this curriculum model. Nineteen of the twenty four Learning and Teaching Network (LTSN) Subject Centres expressed an interest in Problem Based Learning (PBL) on behalf of their communities. In response the LTSN Generic Centre has begun a number of initiatives to co-ordinate developments and raise awareness of what is already going on in the UK.

A mapping exercise to identify whereabouts and in which subjects PBL is being undertaken in the UK has begun. This may lead some to argue for an agreed definition but the Generic Centre is pursuing an inclusive notion of PBL. If a subject identifies their own particular PBL methodology that suits their students' needs then we see this as wholly appropriate. Some subjects though, for example Architecture, do not call their teaching PBL even though that is essentially what they do! The findings will be published on the PBL website (address in contacts box, right).

Work to develop this website now moves into its second stage and next year will be devoted to generating an UK resource for those in the PBL community and those seeking to join it. It is for everyone and we are looking for contributions from all subject areas and comments from those evaluating the site and looking for different features. Any items or ideas - please contact Maggi Savin-Baden. In time the site will be accessible through Subject Centre web sites and through the LTSN Generic Centre site. All these can be located through the main LTSN website.

For those interested in joining the growing PBL community and interested in discussing PBL issues, Ewan Crawford from the Maths, Stats & OR Network Subject Centre has set up a jiscmail discussion list. This can be joined from the jiscmail site. We recently hosted a discussion forum to explore understandings of PBL with over 100 individuals registering from around the world. As with all discussions many fewer contributed, but contributions came from Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Poland and the United States as well as the UK. A summary of the discussion will be made available on the PBL website and another hosted discussion will be arranged for next year.

In July the LTSN Generic Centre organised an event for sharing current thinking about PBL and to explore future activities that Subject Centres and their communities are interested in developing. Main inputs were given by Maggi Savin-Baden, Lewis Elton (pictured above) and Ranald Macdonald. Maggi spoke about research and evaluation, Lewis about different subject
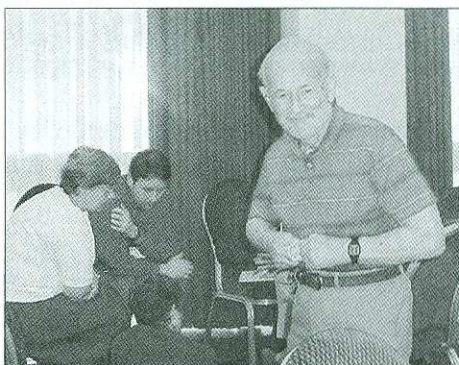
Lewis Elton and delegates in action

understandings of PBL and Ranald spoke about implementing PBL. The afternoon explorations were into assessment, on-line PBL, staff development, materials development for students and PBL networking activities. A report is available from the LTSN Generic Centre via the main LTSN website.

Much research has been done over the last thirty years into PBL but it has often been action research and much longitudinal research remains to be done. The ESRC under its current Teaching and Learning Research Programme is supporting research into the Effectiveness of Problem Based Learning (PEPBL). This study is being carried out with health professionals. To find out more about it contact Mark Newman. Bill Hutchings, one of last year's winners of the TQEF Teaching Fellowship awards, chose to devote his winnings to exploring the potential in a PBL approach to English Literature and in particular teaching 18th Century literature. Given the usual approach to 'problems' arising from every day experience in vocational subjects this seems a challenge indeed. Bill is in the process of creating 'triggers' for use in this academic session, so we await with interest the outcomes of his research and development work. These you will find reported on the PBL website.

Activities that participants at the event wish to see taken forward include:

- Production of a synopsis of current research (in practitioners' language!)
- A gathering and sharing of information about what tools/frameworks exist for evaluating and researching PBL
- Consideration of PBL sustainability issues
- Consideration of the barriers to implementing PBL
- Skills needed by PBL Students documented and shared
- Curriculum change management issues explored and shared
- Consideration of the use of PBL with students from other cultures

- The different use of PBL in different disciplines gathered and shared more widely
- The potential in on-line PBL work explored and shared
- Issues of appropriate assessment strategies and methods
- Ethics of PBL explored and shared
- Development of materials and resources to share across the community
- Guides for facilitators/tutors developed for sharing
- Developing more PBL developers to sustain PBL growth.

The LTSN generic Centre and Subject Centres will seek to co-ordinate work on some of these activities in the coming academic session. We are also planning a trip to Maastricht University, home of a certain style of PBL for those interested in such a visit. I am interested in exploring the broader question of why there is so much interest in new curricula approaches. There are clearly aspects of PBL which both students and tutors find highly appealing in terms of successful student learning. It seems likely that this approach which attempts to build student understanding rather than building student knowledge chimes with the research that shows that learning is actually about building understanding. This can be achieved in other curricula approaches and we need to understand what the essential features are that best enable an effective learning environment to be built within a particular discipline. All those interested in future curricula should keep an eye on the LTSN Generic Centre website for events in this area. Those interested to explore any of the above further please contact me (details below).

Contacts

PBL website (current temporary address)
http://heracles.coventry.ac.uk/pbl/research.htm

Main LTSN website
http://www.ltsn.ac.uk

JISCmail website
http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk

Jill Armstrong
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A Developer's Guide to Major National Initiatives - Part Four

This series, edited by David and Carole Baume, is describing major initiatives to support teaching and learning, with emphasis on implications for staff and educational developers.

In Educational Developments 1.1, David and Carole gave an overview of the main HEFCE teaching and learning initiatives. In 1.3, Jean Ritchie described a range of initiatives in Scotland. In 2.1, Barbara Lloyd-Smith and Geoff Layer described work to improve provision for disabled students and to widen participation.

Here Sarah Porter of the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) describes some of the work of JISC in developing and supporting managed learning environments and an opportunity to bid for funding.

Managed Learning Environments

Sarah Porter
Manager of JCIEL (JISC Committee for Integrated Environments for Learners)

Introduction to JISC

The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) enables colleges and universities to harness the opportunities provided by Information and Communications Technology (ICT). To do this the JISC works strategically to provide:

- Support for Managed Learning Environments (MLEs)
- Access to electronic resources
- Security and authentication applications
- Network infrastructure
- Guidance on institutional change

The JISC is currently funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Learning and Skills Council, the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, the Scottish Further Education Funding Council, the Welsh Funding Councils and the Department of Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment. The JISC works in partnership with the Research Councils.

Learning Technology takes centre stage

One of the most prominent areas of educational technology during the year 2001 is that of Virtual Learning Environments and Managed Learning Environments. Scarcely a week passes within another event focussed upon VLEs or MLEs. Institutions of all shapes and sizes are grappling with the explosion of activity in this area, and trying to get to grips with some common questions:

- What does the terminology mean?
- What is the difference between a VLE and MLE, and why is it important?
- What are the educational gains from using these systems?
- Who can provide help and advice?

The JISC is funding several large programmes of work that are looking at the issues for VLE and MLE definition and implementation in order to help institutions make informed decisions in this important area. This article provides a brief introduction to the concepts of VLEs and MLEs, and then explains how the JISC is trying to help institutions tackle these issues.

VLE or MLE?

In brief, both Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and Managed Learning Environment (MLE) systems include web-based software that is set up by a University or College. The software provides a common point of entry and consistent interface to online learning resources so that students and staff can access all the University's online learning materials through one web page. This is the natural progression from a situation where different departments and faculties have each created their own sets of web pages, all of which have to be maintained and updated in different ways, and which have to be accessed from different web addresses.

Virtual Learning Environments

VLE software generally provides a range of tools to make it easier for teaching staff to create and update on-line learning materials, and for web site administrators to look after those materials. The VLE will usually outline the courses that are offered throughout the University and then provide a separate section for each course where the course tutor can create their own support materials.

As well as making it easy for teachers to set up web pages, there are often a range of communication tools such as web-based bulletin boards and real-time chat. Teachers can send out announcements about the course, and also encourage students to meet online to discuss the course topics between lectures and seminars. Most VLEs will contain easy administration tools so that teachers can assign students to particular groups, and also some level of tracking tools that will give the teacher an overview of how much the students are using the online materials.

Finally, a VLE will usually contain some sort of automated assessment tool that will enable teachers to create online tests if they wish.

The main advantage of the VLE from a teacher's point-of-view is the ease with which courses and materials can be created and managed. From an administrator's point-of-view, online materials are created to be consistent and thus easier to manage across a department or even whole institution.

There is a tendency to focus upon the details of technical specifications for VLEs rather than looking at pedagogic models. The JISC has tried
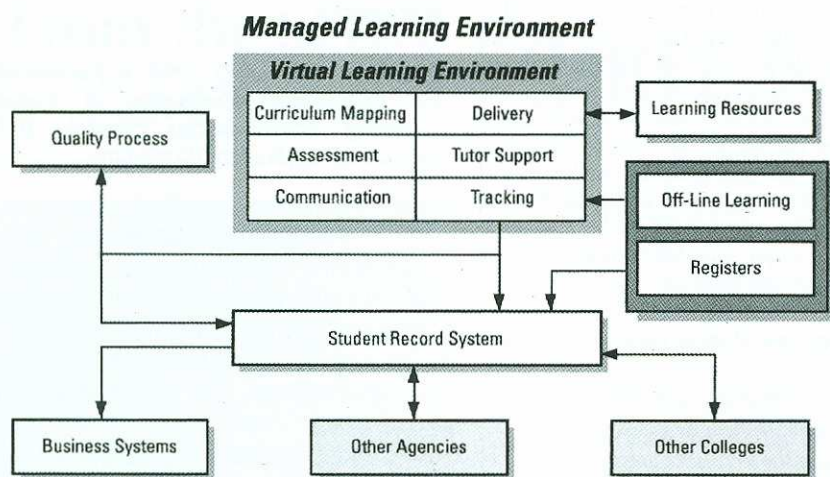
Managed Learning Environment

Figure 1: A Simplistic Diagram to Illustrate One Possible MLE Configuration

to balance this situation and has commissioned work on how to differentiate between some of the VLEs that are available on the market. The report by Sandy Britain and Oleg Liber (1999) is a very good starting point. VLE products are likely to develop further over the coming years, and no single product currently meets all requirements. However, most products are very sophisticated and can be useful if deployed in a way that suits the culture and pedagogic models of the institution.

There are a number of web sites that provide an overview of VLE products. Bruce Landon's review at http://www.ctt.bc.ca/landonline/ is particularly useful as a tool for exploring technical differences rather than pedagogy.

It is also useful to explore some of the VLE planning processes that have been put in place at institutions. The *Building MLEs in HE* programme (see below) is enabling Universities to share their experiences with planning and implementing VLEs.

Managed Learning Environments

The Managed Learning Environment (MLE) refers to a larger system than the VLE. The MLE can contain a number of different systems and processes. The MLE provides a single, learner-centred point of access to all useful information held by the institution. Through the MLE, the learner will be able to access library information and their personal student record, register for courses online, and so on. The MLE is thus a conceptual system rather than a single piece of software, and it will be different from institution to institution. A simplistic diagram to illustrate one possible MLE configuration is available (see figure 1 above).

The importance of the MLE is its potential to have impact upon many different sections of the University. To put a MLE in place will require co-operation from groups such as Management Information Systems (MIS), Personnel, the Registry, and the library services, as well as teaching departments. To successfully put a MLE in

place may require some change to the processes of the institution. For example the methods that are used to send registration information from administration to each department may need to change from paper-based to electronic. JISC is working with a number of universities on a large programme that will help other institutions make decisions about their MLE.

Demonstrating how to build Managed Learning Environments

The two-year *Building MLEs in HE* programme is exploring how to put in place systems and processes that give a single point of entry to a large number of different information sources. The aim of 'joining up' systems is to make access to learning and support systems as easy as possible, whether it be using online learning materials and the digital library, checking the course timetable, or booking a nursery place.

The programme focuses on:

- Demonstrating to the FE and HE community the potential of MLEs to support and enhance learning and teaching

- Identifying the generic and transferable aspect of the projects

- Demonstrating the benefit of a student-centred approach to service provision

- Enriching the educational sector understanding of the cultural and organisation issues encountered when developing MLEs

- Creating technical and organisational guidelines to support the introduction MLEs.

Fourteen projects have been funded so far in the following areas:

Joined up Systems for Learners - projects that will develop a learner-focussed Managed Environment by linking their Virtual Learning Environments to other student support systems.

Joined up Systems for Institutions - projects to integrate a variety of different types of information systems to support learning and teaching (for example joining up student record systems, student registration system, and library system).

IMS - projects that test and explore the implementation of one of the emerging learning technology specifications to support the transfer of data and learning objects between different VLEs.

Roundtables and FlashLights - two projects evaluating whether the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) Teaching and Learning Technology (TLT) Roundtable methodologies for introducing the use of technology in teaching will transfer effectively to a UK environment. The methodology is allowing projects to explore the strategic issues of planning support for technology in teaching.

Sources of information and advice

MLE Information Pack

A MLE Information pack (figure 2 below) has been published to specifically help institutions to procure Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) and make decisions about implementing MLEs. This pack consists of a briefing paper introducing MLEs and VLEs and a series of 23 cards that cover a wide range of issues including VLE procurement, pedagogy, cultural issues, copyright, legal issues, disabilities and accessibility. This pack is complemented by the *Building MLEs in HE* information pack that gives an overview of the themes emerging from the programme, and brief information of each project.

MLE Events

A number of events are held regularly on issues relating to MLEs and their implementation, bringing together all the various strands of MLE work within the JISC. To date there have been two community workshops and two large con-
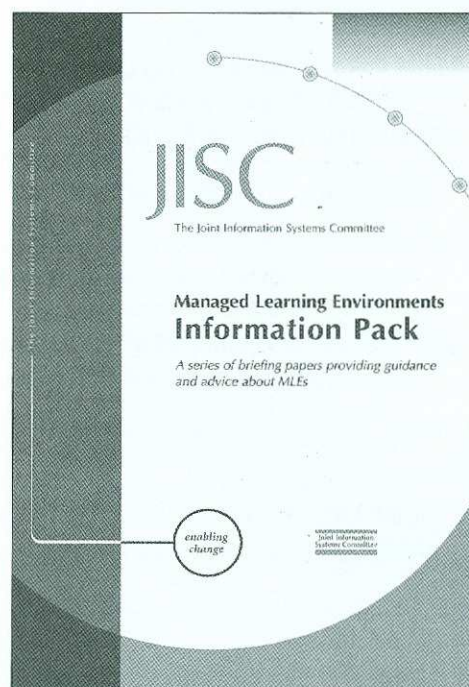

Figure 2: MLE Information Pack

ferences, as well as numerous presentations at other conferences. It is important that lessons learned through the *Building MLEs in HE* programme reach Universities as soon as possible, as they are exploring issues that many HEIs are currently trying to tackle. A one-day conference is planned for late autumn 2001 which will bring together the institutions that have experience of putting MLEs in place and discuss the key issues. This will be complemented by a set of briefing papers.

All information about the events and publications are available from the JISC MLE web site http://www.jisc.ac.uk/mle/

Other JISC-funded activities related to online learning are focussing upon plagiarism detection, the use of standards to ensure interoperability of learning materials, computer assisted assessment, and methodologies for improving the use of technology in teaching.

Next steps: Building MLEs for Life-long Learning

In June 2001 the JISC announced a new programme called *Building MLEs for Lifelong Learning*

that will take the current research into MLEs into the next five years. The focus of this call is to consider the needs of the student in the future learning environment where learning may take place at different institutions and over a less defined time period. In order to explore the information and organisational implications of this new environment, calls are invited for projects that draw upon established FE and HE partnerships to put joint MLE systems in place. These projects will focus on:

- Development of cross institutional architectures;
- Delivery of learning materials;
- Student entitlement or access to services;
- Provision for "virtual cohorts";
- The student record;
- The impact of MLEs on business processes;
- Implications of MLEs for staff development.

The bidding process has two stages; an initial expression of interest and a second, more detailed bid following feedback from the JISC. More information about the call is available at http://www.jisc.ac.uk/pub01/c01_01.html (deadline 14th September 2001).

Reference

Britain, S and Liber, O (1999) **A Framework for Pedagogical Evaluation of Virtual Learning Environments**. Bristol: JISC Technology Applications Programme

The Centre for Educational Interoperability Standards is the UK centre for information about using standard formats for educational resources, a very important issue for those purchasing new VLE and MLE software. Their web site is at

http://www.cetis.ac.uk/

Information about the *Building MLES in HE* projects and their progress is available at

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/mle/7-99/

Information will be added to this site during the course of the projects as issues arise.

Forthcoming SEDA Conferences and Events

SEDA Networks Event
5th SEDA "Networking the Networks" Meeting
17 - 18 October 2001
Manchester Conference Centre

Pre-Conference Workshop Day
Quality Assurance and Enhancement: the driving agenda
19 November 2001
Manchester Conference Centre

6th Annual SEDA Conference
Developing the Developers: professional development of staff and educational developers
20 - 21 November 2001
Manchester Conference Centre

SEDA / AISHE Joint Conference
Supporting and Evaluating Change
11 - 12 April 2002
Dublin Castle Conference Centre

More details on all the above to follow as they become available

Recent HEFCE Publications

Below are the web addresses of some recent HEFCE publications which maybe of interest to readers.

The main site for all HEFCE publications can be found at:

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs

- 01/36 Strategies for widening participation in higher education : a guide to good practice (June 2001)

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/hefce/2001/01_36.htm

- 01/36a Analysis of initial strategic statements for widening participation: Report by Action on Access (July 2001) - *web only*

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/hefce/2001/01_36a.htm

- 01/37 Strategies for learning and teaching in higher education : a guide to good practice (June 2001)

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/hefce/2001/01_37.htm

- 01/37a Analysis of strategies for learning and teaching: Research report by Professor Graham Gibbs (July 2001) - *web only*

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/hefce/2001/01_37a.htm

Review of LTSN Generic Centre / ILT Meeting

Enhancing Continuing Professional Development: for those teaching and supporting learning in higher education

15th May 2001, Glasgow

This was one of three events held between April and June which differed only slightly in content. It was aimed at tutors who deliver postgraduate programmes for new and experienced lecturers, learner support staff, staff developers and LTSN subject centre staff. The delegate list, not surprisingly, included a strong Scottish contingent, but also a significant number of participants from the north of England and beyond.

Following an introduction from Brenda Smith (Head of the LTSN Generic Centre), ILT's Director of Accreditation Caroline Bucklow gave an outline of recent developments in the area of ILT accreditation. Some of the statistics made interesting reading. For example, the ILT had accepted 4493 members who were split fairly evenly between the pre- and post-1992 universities. The ILT processing fee was being paid by 74 higher education institutes, while 30 will pay the membership fee. She described the current routes to both Membership and Associateship, and noted that in the future emphasis would be placed on institutionally based routes and regional consortia, reinforcing ownership by the sector.

Bob Matthew from the Teaching and Learning Service at Glasgow then discussed the subject of Portfolio Development. This session was subtitled "Never mind the weight, feel the quality" which effectively summed up the overall message. As well as discussing design, planning, feedback and assessment participants were asked to work in small groups to decide upon one piece of advice they would give to someone putting together a portfolio. The most succinct was, perhaps inevitably, 'Don't panic!'

The final session before lunch concerned action learning sets and their use in continuing professional development. This was given by Liz Beaty from the Centre for Higher Education Development at Coventry. After describing how such a set works, she discussed the roles of the presenter, supporters and facilitator within the set and gave an example of how one had been used and other possible uses. These included management development and work-based programmes. A second edition of *Action Learning a guide for professional, management and educational development*, which Liz co-authored with Ian McGill, was recently published by Kogan Page and will be reviewed soon in *Educational Developments*.

After lunch, which provided a useful opportunity to meet other delegates including those from the organising bodies, there was a choice of two from three activities. However, the organisers had thoughtfully provided copies of the handouts from all three so that the material covered in the third session didn't have to be missed completely.

The session on Effective Integration of Diversity Issues was given jointly by Sandra Griffiths from the University of Ulster and Steve Wilson from the University of North London. This provided an interesting contrast between these institutions which have very different student bodies. The session concentrated on how the QAA Codes of Practice had been integrated in both cases, particularly in terms of staff development. One way in which this had been done was through input to a number of modules in the learning and teaching postgraduate courses in each case. Both speakers offered case studies of this effective integration into modules from their postgraduate courses in learning and teaching.

The second afternoon session I attended returned to the topic of ILT accreditation. David Ross from Abertay and Shirley Earl from Napier both described their experiences of this from the perspective of people who were already running appropriate courses for staff. The process at Abertay had involved preliminary discussion of issues before the accreditation visit, which had been found to be particularly helpful. The visit itself had been conducted in a "non-confrontational spirit of mutual benefit", and had resulted in a successful outcome. Some of the issues related to ILT membership for staff at Napier were mentioned, and included

the meanings of the various routes, the September 2001 deadline and value for money. In the following discussion, there was a strong feeling that the deadline for fast track membership should not be extended.

The third session considered support for subject-specific developments. The LTSNs for History, Classics and Archaeology, and for Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies showed how their provision aimed to complement institutional and other generic programmes and events, to place generic principles and issues in context, and to address issues unique to their disciplines. Steve Ketteridge and Catherine Haines from Queen Mary, University of London, showed how their Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice offers opportunities for learning and assessment to take place in discipline-specific or cognate groups.

The meeting ended with a plenary session at which the possibility of developing networks in certain specialised areas was discussed. It was felt that this could usefully build on the day's activities and the contacts made.

Dr Paul Yates
Staff Development and Training
Keele University

SEDA Networks Event

5th SEDA "Networking the Networks" Meeting
Staff House Building, The Manchester Conference Centre
17th - 18th October 2001

This event is planned as a one-day activity, spread over two days to allow time and space for personal and serendipitous networking. A delegate registration form is attached to this flyer.

The two sessions on the *first day* will involve structured activities to identify and explicate problems involved in running networks which are concerned with educational development projects in general, and the dissemination of teaching and learning in particular. There is no bar on subject matter - all disciplines and all approaches are welcome. There is no bar on scope or scale - large, nationally-funded projects are as welcome as small-scale departmental or inter-departmental initiatives.

On the *second day* we shall re-examine the identified problems, searching for common types and areas. The aim is that everyone should leave with a selection of ideas to help them solve their networking problems. We shall also spend some time talking about how networking activity could be usefully structured and continued for this community.

Further details and a registration form can be found on the SEDA website at:

http://www.seda.demon.co.uk/events/networks01.html

International Consortium in Madrid

A diary report of the annual council meeting of the International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED)*

Liz Beaty FSEDA
Co-Vice Chair of SEDA and Coventry University

Friday evening and after a lovely day visiting the Prado and being wowed by Goya, I meet up with members of the ICED Council in a central Plaza surrounded by water sculptures and heavy traffic. The directions were clear but it is a big place and two of us are relieved to be joined by two more and gradually most arrive. Our host Carmen Vizcarro (from the emergent Spanish network) is the most welcome – now we feel safe. But some are missing. Fast communication via e-mail has caused havoc and we discover that some delegates have met up at the airport and driven straight to our venue. So it is after 9pm when we eventually arrive at our hostel for the three-day meeting. The staff are undaunted by the late dinner but some of us take time to acclimatise to the Spanish custom of very late lunch and extremely late dinner.

Saturday and we start the meeting with a round of news from each of our respective countries and networks. This has been facilitated through prior circulation of reports on activities of the national networks over the year. SEDA's contribution is culled from the Annual report and shows lot of activity over the year. Council members are interested in learning more about the effects of national funding for teaching and learning strategies and the focus on support for new developers through the Fellowship and the Summer School. The day continues with a workshop where we work in groups to identify common areas of concern. A number of issues emerge including accreditation and how to support new educational developers. The day is useful and interesting and our discussions continue with a walk in the hills and then an exciting bus trip to Segovia where we walk some more before dinner. The trip is not for the squeamish with the winding road around the hills but well worth it for the views and the charm of the town, which boasts a spectacular Roman aqueduct.

Sunday is a full schedule of meetings and workshops. We have a number of important items on the agenda, including the report on IJAD (*International Journal for Academic Development*) and the forthcoming conference in Perth, July 2002. These are both core activities for ICED and engage our interest. Discussions take us into how ICED finances its activities. The organisation does not have a funding stream but rather treats each event and project as self standing. Keeping things simple has to be weighed against the need for the organisation to be active. ICED is a fairly new umbrella organisation – being a network of networks and Council members share concerns about how best to support and develop the mission.

Monday and we discuss membership and the role of ICED officers. Pat Rogers, from Canada, is doing an excellent job as the current Chair and is due to stand down in July next year. Suggestions of how to rotate the Chair and how to support a new Chair are aired. Issues of cultural difference and the limitations of using English as the language of communication in the network are raised. Constructive arguments take us back to the aims of the organisation and a realisation that we need more focus on supporting new networks and in particular emerging groups in countries outside Europe and North America. An historic vote produces a new working group to focus on the aim of support for educational development in developing countries – watch this space!

Back home now and two things occupy my thoughts. The first is how working internationally creates a fruitful learning environment for educational developers. The second is the need to make sure I can get to Perth for an extremely interesting conference - Spheres of Influence: Ventures and Visions sounds enticing!

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* SEDA is a member of the International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED) and one representative (usually the Chair) goes to each meeting of the Council. The aims of ICED are:

- To help partner organisations to develop their capacity for educational development in higher education through the sharing of good practice, problems and solutions.

- To enlarge the number of partner organisations of ICED.

- To help educational developers in countries where no national network exists to form such a network.

- To support educational development in higher education in developing countries.

- To link with other national and international organisations.

More information on the ICED 2002 Conference, Spheres of Influence: Ventures and Visions can be found at

http://www.csd.uwa.edu.au/iced2002/

Contents of Vol 2 (2001) to date

Back issues of all the above are available from the SEDA Office, price £4 per copy.

Plagiarism: Online Tools to Relieve the Tedium of Detection

Graham Alsop and Chris Tompsett
School of Computing and
Information Systems
Kingston University

With the increase in the use of computers and the Internet the opportunities for students to plagiarise have increased many fold. Electronic source material coupled with word processed submission facilitates a 'cut and paste' mentality where a student's engagement with a subject can be bypassed. Whereas in the past teachers and the library monitored the quality of source material available to students, the Internet extends both the range and quality of source material available. There are two consequences that can no longer be ignored: the detection of students who cheat, and a rethink of how students are assessed. The latter is outside the scope of this review.

Detecting plagiarism

The opportunity to deliberately plagiarise, through disguise of original source material, or submission of the work of another student has never been higher. Detection will either require an institution wide approach or a level of Internet skills among staff that can at least match those of the students.

Detection of plagiarism will typically involve two phases - the filtering of suspicious cases and the identification of sources. Although tools are being developed, most cases still require both intelligence and software tool support.

Each case represents diversion of time and effort from education. If there is clear evidence that work is original and created by a specific individual there is no need to suspect plagiarism but increasing cohort sizes now militates against this ideal. Filtering focuses attention on a limited number of cases that require investigation.

Most cases detected manually by the authors are indicated by a change in writing style. The style will seem inappropriate - too precise, formal or technically proficient for a particular level or type of assessment. The entire submission may include too much tangential material or be too coherent, indicating that one article has been copied.

There are a few tools to support such filtering. Forensic linguistics (eg. http://www.thetext.co.uk/info.html) may provide indications of how a number of authors have contributed to a single document but these have not been tested by the authors. Alternatively you can suspect every student.

In content, the identification of online sources is well supported by tools on the Internet (see links below) and much helped by having the text we wish to find in front of us (possibly disguised of course). These range from tools that take a specific document and report on similarities to other material on the web to those that allow you to submit the work of an entire cohort and extend the analysis to indicate commonality between the submissions as well. All of these have limitations at present and a search engine may still identify cases that are otherwise missed.

We are certain that neither of us find spotting plagiarism enjoyable. Our concern is that the advent of Internet technology has encouraged students to believe that having the correct answer in a document is synonymous with understanding the answer. In the classic model of higher education it was difficult to do this - although the ability to photocopy source material started this process. We will need to become more constructive in our approach to assessment at this level, to ensure that a student must demonstrate independent understanding of how and why a solution works - and not just the production of the solution itself.

An online version of this article, including links to the resources mentioned, can be found on the SEDA website at:

http://www.seda.demon.co.uk/eddevs/vol2/plagiarism.html

Some links

http://plagiarism.org
This site charges a fee but allows you to upload essays and then use the service to find uncited material. It will also look for similar patterns within this uncited material and its 'library of existing material' to see if minor words have been altered. It uses a type of 'digital fingerprint' in looking for sufficient similarities.

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/mle/plagiarism/
The Joint Information Systems Committee is funding a programme on Electronic Plagiarism Detection. There are three strands to this: A Pilot of Plagiarism Detection Software, a Technical Review of Free Text Plagiarism Detection Software, a Technical Review of Source Code Plagiarism Detection Software, and a Good Practice Guide. Initial reports are due soon.

http://www.findsame.com/
A demonstration of Digital Integrity's programme is available via this link. It allows you to submit Microsoft Word, html or text documents for analysis. It looks for any other document, from a list crawled through on the Web, that contains identical content longer than a line of text.

http://www.canexus.com/eve/index.shtml
Trials of this software are available to download. It allows you to submit Microsoft Word, Corel Word Perfect or plain text documents and compares the file with internet sites that contain similarities for you to consider.

http://www.turnitin.com/
turnitin is a commercial site that provides a 24-48 hour turn around to produce an 'originality report' - a colour coded analysis of the sources most likely to have been the source of a submission.

http://www.google.com/
Most Search Engines, when used carefully, provide remarkable help. However, they do raise an important issue. Some file types are not searched by some engines, for example, portable document format (pdf). Many articles are published in pdf to lower the possibilities of copying or altering them. Google currently extracts the text and will identify matches which many other search engines will miss. If you are confident that part of the work is plagiarised then using Google is a good place to start. The advanced search facility allows you to look for exact matches to strings of text. It does not extrapolate your search. For example, in the results for a search for "find" it does not return matches for finder, finds, finding, findings, etc., so that you can be confident that what you search for is what you get.

Software for the identification of collusion in writing software code can be found at Moss
http://www.cs.berkeley.edu/~aiken/moss.html

or Jplag
http://wwwipd.ira.uka.de:2222/

Reviews

Books

Changing Academic Work: Developing the Learning University
Elaine Martin
SRHE / Open University Press (1999)
£18.99 pbk
ISBN 0 335198 83 X

Thinking of buying the head of your institution a present? Perhaps not, but this book should be compulsory reading for all those that lead and manage educational institutions; it contains a wealth of material for those wanting to improve the environment in which learning should be central. Elaine Martin has crafted an enjoyable and absorbing read that captures many of the features of working in education. She has thus usefully created an *aide memoire* for literature and ideas from several areas of education management, which are coupled with unique insights from the author's work and experience.

Anyone wanting to improve their effectiveness as an educational leader and lecturer should consider this book as a useful source of questions and pointers to some answers; one of its strongest features is the way it leads readers to consider their own practice. It is written in a human way about learning and environments that enhance learning. The book draws together literature from student learning and learning organisations, with hints of the personal change literature. It focuses on higher education but has important messages for those working in all educational settings.

A main source of material for the book is a survey that examined the perceptions of 160 academic staff working in higher education in the UK and Australia. Table 5.1 (extract below) suc-

cinctly pulls together the results of the survey, aligned to the student learning and organisational learning literature. Two examples from this Table are illuminating. The first two columns demonstrate the perceptions of academic staff in different positions in the institution (but equally 'stuck'). The last two columns demonstrate how, by drawing on the student learning and organisational learning literature, it is possible to think differently about the situation and to move forward.

The title accurately portrays the contents, and this text should be a serious consideration for course leaders, students and more importantly those involved in leading educational institutions.

Mike Cook
City University, London

Innovating in Higher Education: Teaching, Learning and Institutional Cultures
Andrew Hannan and Harold Silver
SRHE / Open University Press (2000)
£22.50 pbk
ISBN 0 335205 37 2

It's always gratifying to find *proper* research which supports one's own not very humble observations. The authors of this book spent several years investigating in some depth the experience and perceptions of 'innovation' in learning and teaching at undergraduate level. Their study included innovations initiated by individuals; 'guided', as in the Enterprise in Higher Education scheme, or 'directed', by system-wide policies and practices.

The first phase of their research focused on individual innovators in 16 universities, old and new. Readers of *Educational Developments* may not be surprised to learn that the authors discovered that

'... it seems that innovators will take on extra work, learn new skills, court unpopularity with other staff and

Extract taken from Table 5.1

Academic staff in non-leadership roles say	Academic staff in leadership roles say	Students learning literature says	Learning organisation literature says
'Senior University leaders have limited or flawed vision.'	'Staff will not change.'	'Learners need to see the salience of what they are being asked to learn and how they are being asked to change.'	'The needs and strengths of staff, as well as the force of external demands, require attention.'
'People are not valued. Their past and present achievements are ignored.'	'Leaders also feel undervalued and under-supported.'	'Regular and supportive feedback is necessary for learning. Learning involves change.'	'Change can be painful but also liberating.'

take risks with their own careers so long as they feel that by doing so they can improve the quality of their teaching, and/or, if they feel that circumstances are such that they have no choice but to depart from their old methods to cope with new demands'.

The second phase investigated, in five institutions, 'top down' managers' views, and 'bottom up' lecturers (not necessarily innovators), to consider what institutional climates, frameworks, or cultures support or inhibit innovation in teaching and learning. The case studies refute the tempting but simplistic notion that the difference between old and new universities is enough to account for differences in approach to teaching, learning and innovation.

'The study of innovation in teaching and learning is a study of interactions, attitudes, institutional policies and practices, national policies and the consensual and confrontational characteristics of all of them'

So this has not been light holiday reading. But if this kind of complexity about how people and organisations manage change, or fail to manage it, fascinates you, this is gripping stuff.

The book ends on a hopeful note, observing real system-wide changes which should support the individual teacher whom the authors see at the heart of innovation. The authors make no specific recommendations to potential innovators; mine would be to read this book before you try to change anything. It will help you understand the nature of the challenges within and beyond your institution, and support you in what can be a lonely struggle.

Lesley MacDonald
University of Durham

From the SEDA Co-Chairs

As the new Co-Chairs, we are getting our feet under the table and bums on seats, (chairs).

Now, more than ever, we are conscious of how hard it is to follow the act that are predecessors, Liz Beaty and Ranald Macdonald carried out so effectively. They led SEDA through a particularly difficult time when the operational remit was challenged, and it's role in higher education became vulnerable as new, well funded players entered the arena. With hindsight it might be easy to see what had to happen, but at the time they took over it was impossible to imagine that the UK teaching and learning environment would change as radically as it has. Sure-footedly, they led the association through negotiations and jostlings of other stakeholders.

However, they did very much more than political manoeuvring. They generated ideas, supported committees and individuals, and always seemed to have exactly the right thing to say when wise words were required. They have both also taken SEDA and its values around the world, contributing to the International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED), and encouraging and supporting countries establishing their own teacher accreditation schemes.

Liz, who was involved with the accreditation since the start, worked closely with the Teacher Accreditation Committee through "recent interesting times." She has been a guide and stalwart supporter for the Professional Development in Higher Education (PDHE) Group, and its emerging reformation as Professional Development Accreditation (PDA). Prior to her Co-Chair role she was one of the pilot group who created the SEDA Fellowship Scheme and was herself in the first group to win this recognition.

Ranald was one of the founders of *Educational Developments*, works with the Committee, and is Co-Editor. He took an active and supportive role with the Networks and Events and Conference Committees and also did a great deal to strengthen the SEDA's research credentials, convening the Research Development Network and fostering links with the Society for Research in Higher Education (SRHE).

They will be continuing to work with us as Vice Co-Chairs until next Easter, and we are very pleased, and reassured that they will be there to hold our hands. We will endeavour to continue their tradition of forward thinking, encouragement and support for committees and individual members, and for their consistent energy and cheerfulness.

Thanks, Liz and Ranald - from all of us.

Hazel Fullerton and Barry Jackson
SEDA Co-Chairs

2001 NTFS Winners

Congratulations go to SEDA Conference Committee member Dr John Peters (pictured below) who has been successful in the latest round of National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) Awards.

John will use the £50,000 fellowship to undertake research in order to discover, through a student-centred study, why many students and staff are resistant to the use of Personal Development Planning (PDP) in higher education. He says: "This project will make a significant difference to the use and development of PDP by establishing the factors behind this resistance. My aim is to try to address these issues with possible solutions and then disseminate the results in order to assist with the effective management of change."

John, along with the 19 other award winners (full list below), was presented with his prize by the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Higher Education, the Rt Hon Margaret Hodge, at an awards dinner in London on July 10 2001.
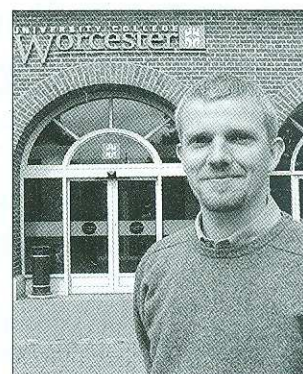
John Peters - NTFS 2001 winner

National Teaching Fellowship Scheme Awards winners 2001:

- Professor Christopher Budd, Department of Mathematical Sciences, University of Bath
- Dr Claire Davis, School of Metallurgy and Materials, University of Birmingham
- Ruth Soetendorp, School of Finance and Law, Bournemouth University
- David Grantham, School of International Studies and Law, Coventry University
- Susan Armitage, Higher Education Development Centre, Lancaster University
- Professor Ian Hughes, School of Biomedical Sciences, University of Leeds
- Mick Wallis, Department of English and Drama, Loughborough University
- Nick Byrne, Language Centre, London School of Economics
- Professor Paul O'Neill, Department of Medicine, University of Manchester
- Dr Philip Frame, Business School, Middlesex University
- Margaret Johnson, London Region, Open University
- Dr Les Jervis, School of Biological Sciences, University of Plymouth
- Dr Michael McCabe, School of Computer Science and Mathematics, University of Portsmouth
- Dr Christopher Rowland, School of Strings, Royal Northern College of Music
- Dr Anthony Rosie, School of Social Science and Law, Sheffield Hallam University
- Caroline Walker-Gleaves, School of Education, University of Sunderland
- Dr Lesley-Jane Reynolds, School of Biomedical and Life Sciences, University of Surrey
- Professor Ben Knights, School of Law, Arts and Humanities, University of Teesside
- Dr John Peters, Learning and Teaching Centre, University College Worcester
- Dr Ursula Lucas, Business School, University of the West of England.

Details of all the project plans will be available in due course on the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme website at:

http://ntfs.ilt.ac.uk/

Joint SEDA / AISHE Conference

SUPPORTING AND EVALUATING CHANGE:
enhancing the practice and scholarship of learning, teaching and assessment

11-12th April, 2002
Dublin Castle Conference Centre

Further details will follow as they become available

The SEDA Fellowship

Accreditation for Professionals who work in Staff and Educational Development in Higher Education

SEDA Fellowship Support Days 2001 / 2002

There will be two SEDA Fellowships Support days on:
26th February 2002 and **6th June 2002**

plus a shorter dedicated pre-conference session at the November conference in Manchester
6.15 - 9.30pm on the 19th November 2001

These events are designed for:

- those considering the Fellowship
- those recently registered
- those compiling their portfolios
- and even existing Fellowship holders, who could use this opportunity to consider their Continuing Professional Development.

Whatever stage you are at, these days are designed to give you the opportunity to dedicate some time to progressing your Fellowships plans and reflecting on your continuing development.

It is a time to meet other Fellowships candidates and holders, look at existing portfolios and CPD plans and discuss the common questions and problems faced in compiling them. This will help you plan the work needed for your submission and if appropriate, prepare for the interview. We aim to use this time to make the Fellowship process more personally valuable for you so that you can complete the process successfully. If you are not enrolled on the scheme but are thinking seriously about it, we will be able to give you a clear idea of what is needed so that you can decide if now is the right time for you to register.

The November conference session is particularly timed to give existing Fellowship holders the opportunity to reflect with colleagues on the CPD undertaken over the year and to plan for the development for next year. It is often very helpful to talk through with another staff or educational developer just what has been learnt and how it might be put into practice, and having done so should then make it very easy to complete the Fellowships CPD report for the year. It might also provide an opportunity to talk through issues of career progression which it might be difficult to discuss with colleagues in the same institution.

The SEDA Fellowship and Associate Fellowship is the only professional accreditation scheme for staff and educational developers, and you can do it!

For more information about the SEDA Fellowship scheme see the SEDA website or contact the SEDA Office.

www.seda.demon.co.uk/fellow.html

SEDA Teacher Accreditation Scheme To Join the New SEDA Accreditation Framework

As has been previously reported in *Educational Developments*, SEDA has been developing a new framework for its accreditation schemes. Formally the Professional Development in Higher Education (PDHE) scheme, the new framework also has a new name: the Professional Development Accreditation Framework (PDAF).

The first award to be recognised under the new framework is the SEDA PDAF Embedding Learning Technologies Award, and further details on this can be found on page 25 of this issue. A second award, for Supervising Postgraduate Research, is currently undergoing the new recognition process.

Amongst the other Programme Development Groups, working towards recognition, is the former SEDA Teacher Accreditation Scheme. The SEDA PDAF Committee were delighted to welcome the Teacher Accreditation scheme on board and Anthony Brand, Chair of the SEDA Teacher Accreditation Committee, says ...

"In recent years the complexion of higher education has changed rapidly and SEDA as an organisation is continuing to examine the role it should play. We now have in place a new Professional Development Accreditation (PDA) framework for recognising courses and awards. At the May meeting of the Teacher Accreditation Committee it was felt to be appropriate to move across into the new framework. The aspiration is to establish a new set of refreshed and progressive teacher accreditation stages which will replace those offered at this time. To do this a Programme Development Group is being established and the first meeting will take place on Thursday 16th August in London. At this time it is likely that we shall start by picking up the work of the Booth Committee and have a set of three stages which range from Associate Teacher through to Advanced Teacher (the names are most probably going to change)."

It is planned that the official launch of the new framework will take place during the annual SEDA conference in Manchester in November, with presentations from all the Awards and Programme Development Groups on offer to delegates.

SEDA Welcomes LTSN Subject Centres to Membership

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome the Learning and Teaching Support Network and each of its 24 Subject Centres to SEDA membership.

Update from Universities UK

William Locke
Policy Adviser, Universities UK

In *Educational Developments* 1.4 (November 2000), I outlined various Universities UK activities aimed at achieving two of our strategic aims: supporting high quality learning and teaching, and encouraging wider participation in higher education and social inclusion. Below is an update on our current activities in these areas:

Institute for Learning and Teaching

Universities UK is working closely with the ILT to promote the Institute within universities and to secure its future standing within the sector. It has contributed to developments in CPD and the initial entry route for experienced staff. Universities UK also supported the election of Sir Ken Calman, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Durham, as Chair of the ILT Council and is closely involved in current initiatives to boost membership and establish the ILT as the main vehicle for professionalisation in HE teaching.

Learning and Teaching Support Network

We are also very supportive of the LTSN, and Professor Rick Trainor, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Greenwich, chairs the LTSN Steering Group. We have representatives on the Advisory Group for the Generic Centre and are participating in the Centre's joint initiative with HESDA on part-time teachers. We are currently looking to increase our collaboration with the LTSN.

Progress Files

Together with the LTSN Generic Centre, the Standing Conference of Principals (of colleges of higher education, SCoP) and the QAA, we have developed a support and guidance framework for the implementation of Progress Files in HE, including Guidelines. Universities UK and SCoP are currently undertaking a survey of HEIs on how far they have been able to implement the two elements of the Progress File, the transcript and the personal development plan (PDP). Earlier this year, we funded the Centre for Recording Achievement to produce a report on the costs and benefits of implementing progress files.

Empoyability

We are supporting research into the nature of graduate employability and ways of enhancing this, including the development of key skills and the integration of work experience. We have contributed to the recent DfES report on work experience. We are monitoring the development of the Foundation Degree, and support the use of innovative learning and assessment methods and promote collaboration between HEIs and FE partners in establishing these new qualifications.

HE Careers Services Review

Following the publication of the Harris Report, we have convened the Joint Implementation Group, in collaboration with SCoP and QAA. This aims to develop guidance on those recommendations in the report that were addressed to the sector as a whole, such as outlining core services and statements of entitlement for students, graduates and employers, and the recruitment and development of careers services staff. It will also bid for Treasury funds to improve the ICT infrastructure for HE careers services.

e-Learning

Following the *Business of Borderless Education* project, we have established an international observatory to keep an eye on the market and disseminate good practice. Universities UK continues to play a key role in the HEFCE e-university initiative.

Quality assurance

With HEFCE and SCoP we have encouraged the QAA to build on institutions' own QA arrangements, reduce the burden of accountability and preserve HEIs' power to determine curricula and assessment strategies.

Teacher education

We continue to work closely with key bodies such as the TTA, Ofsted, DfES and the GTCs to raise issues regarding the initial training, induction and continuing professional development of teachers. We aim to draw parallels between issues in the teaching profession across the school, FE and HE boundaries with a view to balancing regulation with professional responsibility.

New Opportunities for All Concordat

Together with the schools' and colleges' associations, SCoP and UCAS, we are exploring new ways to encourage people, particularly the young and disadvantaged, to participate in HE. We launched our statement on widening participation at our *Aspiration and Achievement* conference in June.

Access Advisory Partnership

Universities UK hosts the AAP, a consultancy service for widening participation available to all HEIs in the UK, with funding currently until December 2002.

Widening participation

We are following up our influential 1998 report, *From Elitism to Inclusion*, with a new set of case studies of good practice in widening participation, focusing on geographical areas (SW, NI, Wales), subject areas (eg Medicine, Creative Arts) and types of HEI (research-led, specialised) missing from the original study. This report will be published in November 2001.

Fair Enough? is a study of admissions decision-making and the development of criteria based on applicants' potential to benefit from HE, as well as their attainment in public exams. It is due to report in autumn 2002.

Student finance

We have commissioned the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information, Open University, and the Social Science Research Centre, Southbank University, to undertake a study of student term-time employment and perceptions of debt and their impact on academic performance. This will report in autumn 2002.

**For further information, please contact:**

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Policy Adviser, Universities UK
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London WC1H 9HQ

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E-mail: william.locke@cvcp.ac.uk

http://www.UniversitiesUK.ac.uk

SEDA Summer School for Educational Developers

Lancaster House Hotel, Lancaster
18th - 20th July 2001

SEDA
STAFF AND EDUCATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION
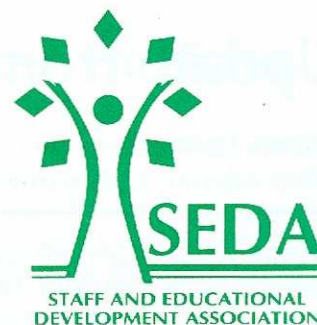
The first SEDA Summer School for Staff and Educational Developers was held in Lancaster in July and was heralded a great success by participants and presenters alike. 17 colleagues took part in the course, from institutions and LTSN Subject Centres across the UK. The 3 day event was led by Dr Rhona Sharpe FSEDA and Professor Liz Beaty FSEDA, with Dr Ray Land FSEDA, Ranald Macdonald FSEDA, David Baume FSEDA and James Wisdom also presenting sessions.

A participant's diary of the event will appear in issue 2.4 of *Educational Developments*. But before that, below are some of the comments and feedback received from the course. And plans are already underway for the second SEDA Summer School for Staff and Educational Developers!

What I have found particularly useful is ...

- Networking, sharing ideas with colleagues / participants.

- Time for discussion / exchange of ideas.

- The opportunity to meet with / share with other developers and to have such excellent input. Thank you.

- The chance to speak with other colleagues.

- The individual mentoring.

- Hearing other's experiences (from varying levels of expertise and subject areas).

- Scholarship of teaching - theories of T&L.

- Networking - explanation of what goes on elsewhere.

- Practical doing focus (but tension with my first point).

- Workshop on running workshops. The deconstruction of what was happening (and why) was particularly useful, as well as the variety of approaches modelled (poster tour, etc) which I had not experienced.

- Overall range of complementary activities was very well done to a very high standard - right balance of presentations/workshops.

- Information on workshops (running of, etc) very useful.

- The chance to meet other people who are very new to the profession.

- We seem to have very similar fears and expectations.

- The sessions where we actually practised the role (consultancy / mentoring).

- Getting to know new ED people.

- Being offered personal space wrt my job /role / aspirations.

- The sculpture was amazing and has really made me think

- Wide range of experience / roles to tap into.

- Exploring our problems as ed/staff developers.

- Participating in workshops and reflecting on the process. The ability to suspend the activity to consider how the situation would work if running workshop/session yourself.

- Workshops: how to run workshops; evaluation; learning from experience

- All very relevant and useful to my work.

- Very relaxed friendly atmosphere.

- Across the 'whole event' and each of the sessions a better understanding of the different aspects of my role, and importantly for me, a recognition of what is realistically achievable. This realisation will allow me to achieve a better balance in my life.

Some of those at the first SEDA Summer School in Lancaster in July, from the left: Marilyn Thorpe, Ranald Macdonald, Liz Beaty, David Baume, Mike Saunders, Russell Warhurst, Jon Yorke, Penny Fowler-Braund, Viv Lever, Carol Montford, Yolande Knight, Amanda Perry, Jane Wellens, Sarah Tweedie, Barbara Hodgson, Stephen Bostock, Abigail Hind, Paul Yates. Not in the picture were Ginnie Willis, John Sweet, James Wisdom, Rhona Sharpe and Ray Land.

SEDA Small Grants 2001
Access to Success

Equal Opportunities is a fundamental value and SEDA welcomes the government initiatives to increase participation in and access to HE through drawing in a wider range of students from diverse backgrounds and with different abilities.

It is not enough however to pack them high and hope they'll flourish in a culture and set of approaches evolved for a select few. We need to find, explore and share strategies and methods to ensure that all of our students have the opportunities to succeed.

With this in mind, in May 2001 SEDA invited applications for grants of up to £500 for work which addresses this area and related issues, for example student retention, orientation, transition, student centred learning.

We are now pleased to announce that four bids have been successful, details of which can be found below.

The Evidence Base for Teaching and Learning Improvements
Dr Angela Brew FSEDA, Institute for Teaching and Learning, University of Sydney

What is the research evidence that supports our work as staff developers? For example, when staff and educational developers suggest changes to an academic's teaching, how do they know that what they suggest will be successful in meeting desired outcomes? What is needed is an accessible website where the best available evidence on teaching and learning issues in higher education can easily be found.

The Institute for Teaching and Learning at the University of Sydney is in the process of setting up a website designed to bring together the best available evidence on topics of strategic importance to the work of staff and educational developers in encouraging universities and individual academics to change their teaching and learning. This project is funded from the University of Sydney Teaching Initiatives Project. The first two topics funded in this project are: the First Year Experience and The Role of Clear Goals and Standards in the Quality of a University Education.

The evidence will come from leading international journals in the ISI (Web of Science) list (see http://wos.isiglobalnet2.com/CIW.cgi) and publications of an equivalent standard. The evidence needs to be, as far as possible, complete and it needs to be systematically and critically evaluated.

The proposed project will examine and critically evaluate a third topic, ie. evidence for the Factors Affecting Student Retention from first to second year. Retention rates are a key issue in relation to equal opportunities, because the evidence seems to suggest that retention rates for non-equity groups are lower than for mainstream student populations. However, what is needed is a systematic, complete, in depth critical evaluation of best available international research evidence and the presentation of that evidence in a form that is readily accessible to busy academic developers.

Issues Which Influence the Progress of Access to Social Work Students on a Particular Dip HE Social Work Course
Karen Jones, Lecturer in Social Work, Faculty of Health and Social Care, University of the West of England

The Dip HE Social work programme at UWE draws the majority of its' students from the local population. From an intake of 55 full and part-time students in September 2000, 53% came from local Access to Social Work programmes. The aim of these courses in common with other Access programmes is to provide a route to Higher Education for mature students who do not have the necessary qualifications for direct entry. The recruitment of people who have been traditionally under represented in Higher Education, specifically, members of minority ethnic groups, women returnees, disabled people and people from working class backgrounds is explicitly sought. There is perception amongst university staff and others involved in the Dip SW, that while many of these students do well on the course, a higher than average proportion find themselves struggling during their first year and are more likely than other students, to fail the course as a whole.

Aim of the project is to establish the issues which influence the progress of Access to Social Work students on a particular Dip HE Social Work course.

Supporting Students with Dyslexia in the Effective Use of C&IT in Their Academic Studies
Andrew Sackville, Head of Teaching and Learning Development, Edge Hill College of Higher Education

An increasing number of students with dyslexia and other additional learning needs are now entering higher education. Alongside this, an increasing number of academic programmes contain a significant amount of online teaching. Students with dyslexia or with other additional learning needs are finding themselves disadvantaged within this growing online community, where a substantial amount of material is text-based. There is therefore a real danger that having recruited such students to higher education, they might withdrawn from certain C&IT based programmes because they cannot cope with the technology.

This project focuses on both orientation and retention. It seeks to design a supported online programme to orientate these students to online learning, and to introduce them to both specialist assistive software and to the virtual learning environments (VLEs) used in online teaching. Such a programme will be transferable to other HE institutions and will also be relevant to other areas of tertiary education.

Good Practices in Student Retention
Dr Gina Wisker FSEDA, Director of Learning and Teaching Development, Anglia Polytechnic University (APU)

With the current and ongoing concern for widening participation and increasing student numbers, it is essential that we focus on how to retain and enable our students so that their higher education experience is a positive one. This project therefore aims to bring together information on successful practices in student retention and to identify barriers to retention. The findings will be of use to all colleagues in the sector.

The project will take the format of a two part research base activity which will work on local examples set against a background of information from the full variety of colleagues in HE, and with the students themselves to pinpoint effective strategies for student retention. It will:

- use formal and informal networks to identify successful retention practices in other institutions, including those in Australia, the Far East and South Africa.

- work with schools within a single institution (APU) to focus down on specific successful strategies by identifying them through a) course monitoring reports (documentary analysis), b) interviews with staff and c) interviews / focus groups with students (involving 50 students in several schools).

The School of Languages and Social Sciences within APU has particularly high retention rates and so the initial focus of the research will be on this school's strategies. Strategies identified here will then be matched with those used by staff in other schools, and set in the context of effective strategies in other institutions.

In Praise of Medians: assessment, averages, aggregation and adjustment

Stephen Bostock FSEDA, Academic Staff Developer
Mike Brough, Examinations Officer, Computer Science Department
University of Keele

Cuthbert (2001) considered the problem of detecting variation between markers and adjusting for it. We continue this assessment theme by considering how best to summarize student marks, and how to adjust and combine marks for different assessments. We recommend the use of medians and quartiles, and we are skeptical of aggregating marks by simple averaging.

> The External Examiner in an Examiners' Meeting:
> *"Let me turn to the papers. I was rather alarmed by some of the marking disparities. On the semiology paper, the internal marker, Mr Odgers, covered a wide range of marks in his assessment, whereas the other internal marker, Dr Piercemiller, gave every one of the 42 candidates a mark of 57. I'd welcome your comments on that."*
> (Laurie Taylor, THES, July 6 2001)

This may be a familiar, if exaggerated, scene. Many academics recently sat in examiners' meetings considering lists of student names with columns of marks alongside them. We scanned averages (arithmetic means), and possibly standard deviations, for aberrant modules with unusually low or high means, or large standard deviations. Often we considered students' overall module marks generated from combining different types of assessments, and overall programme marks from combining module marks. At worst, final assessment processes degenerate into a statistical minefield where we struggle to make the numbers come out right according to our own view of student performance.

There are three issues worth considering: statistical measures of typical marks and their spread, the problem of aggregating marks, and methods of adjusting marks.

Averaging

Three common measures of the average (i.e. typical) level of marks are means, medians, and modes.

1. The arithmetic mean (or just 'the mean') of a list of marks is the sum of the marks divided by the number of marks.

2. The median is the middle mark when the list is ordered from lowest to highest (minimum to maximum). If there is an even number of marks the median is the number halfway between the two middle marks.

3. The mode is the most frequent value or, if the marks are grouped into, say, 0-10%, 11-20% ... classes, the modal class is the one with most members.

The counts of marks in all the classes form a frequency distribution. Usually shown as a histogram, this is informative about student performance (examples are below). But the mode is only reliable for large sets of marks and we do not consider it further.

Should we use means or medians? The median and mean will differ when the distribution of marks is skewed, or asymmetrical. In a symmetrical (e.g. normal) distribution the mean and median are equal, but real marks are often not symmetrical. Figure 1 (below) shows a distribution of some real marks with a right skew, where the mean exceeds the median. Figure 2 (above right) shows an example of a left-skewed distribution of marks, where the mean is less than the median. The mean, which includes a small part of each mark, is raised or lowered by the skew

while the median is unaffected. We could check the distribution of marks for skew (although larger sample sizes would be needed to do this properly) and then only use means with symmetrically distributed marks, but why bother? The median makes fewer assumptions about the nature and distribution of marks.

We conventionally allocate marks on a scale of 0 to 100%. This is an ordinal scale, not an interval scale. An interval scale, in addition, requires that every interval (1%) on the scale has the same significance. The interval between, say, 10% and 15% cannot be equated to the interval between 65% and 70%. For example, if a student has a mark on two examination questions of 40% and 50% we are happy to give them an overall mark of 45%. The difference between 40% and 45% is not much different from the difference between 45% and 50%. However, if a second student has marks of 10% and 80% we might again award an overall mark of 45% but this makes less sense. The second student clearly had a problem with one question but showed that she could sometimes have outstanding performance, while the first showed a consistent, but only basic, understanding.

Addition and taking means assume interval data and are therefore inappropriate for ordinal data, and if used will mislead. Medians work equally well for ordinal and interval data (and ratio data: see Siegel and Castellan, 1988, for a discussion of data types). So there are two reasons for using medians: data may be skewed and in principle ordinal marks should never be summarized by a mean.

Similar arguments can be made in favour of the use of quartiles as a measure of the spread of marks, rather than standard deviations. The first quartile is the value with the lowest quarter of marks below it when the marks have been ordered; the third quartile is the value with the highest quarter of marks above it. Therefore, the distance between the first and the third quartile (the inter-quartile range) contains the middle half of the marks. This is an easy way of understanding the spread of marks around the median. To use standard deviation we need to know that one standard deviation on either side of the mean includes 68% of the marks, and in any case this is only true for a normal distribution, which we may not have.

Aggregating

Examiners' meetings typically have numerous component marks for modules and programmes and need to provide a summary statistic. This

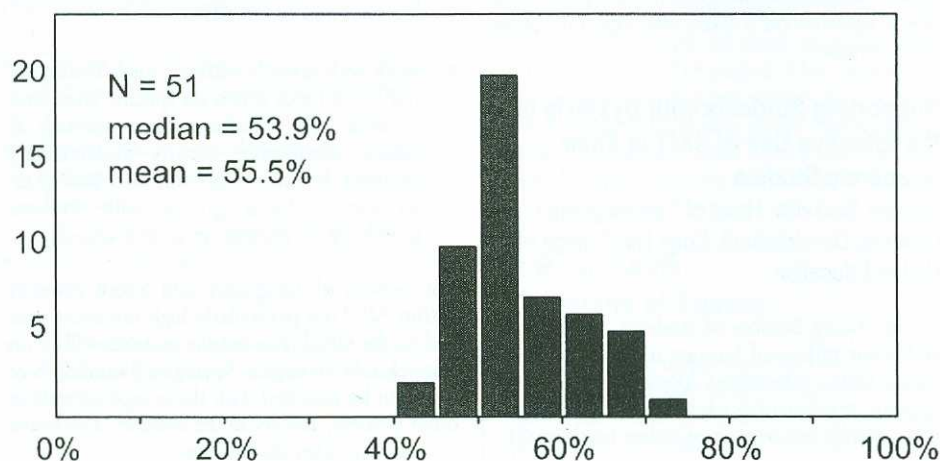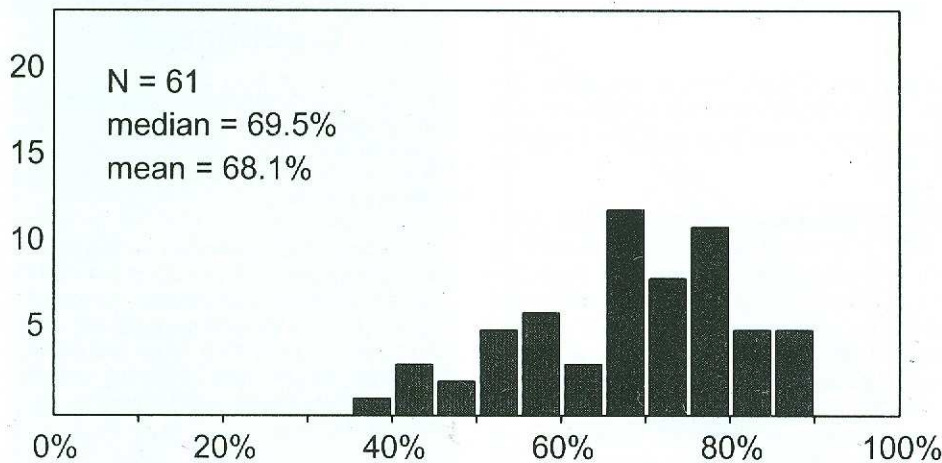## Figure 1: Distribution of Marks with a Right Skew

N = 51
median = 53.9%
mean = 55.5%

Figure 2: Distribution of Marks with a Left Skew

N = 61
median = 69.5%
mean = 68.1%

Adjusting

Why should we adjust a set of marks? There may be problems with the teaching or assessment of a module and we need to compensate for this before making a summary mark. In our putative examiners' meeting, we may note that one module has many high marks while another has many low ones. Their medians differ markedly from those of most modules. On enquiring into the assessment of the first module we find that it was a new module and the assessment methods were over-generous. On reviewing the second module, we find that there were problems with the teaching. A good summarizing algorithm will be less affected by an occasional unreliable mark but in both cases we may want to adjust the module marks before approving them, to compensate as best we can for errors in teaching or assessment.

Additional problems occur when students are allowed a choice of modules, or of assessments within modules, for example, a choice of questions in an examination. If a unit has suffered from errors in teaching or assessment we may want to adjust the marks so that the student transcript is more accurate even if no summary is to be made. Whether we should make an adjustment will depend upon the uses to be made of the marks: even if the driving instructor was at fault and taught the learner driver badly, or the examiner died of heart attack during the driving test, we would still not award a driving license if the driver were not competent (minimum competence). Ultimately, while we would not want to penalize students for our

necessarily throws away some information. Aggregation of marks always has this problem, whether it is combining marks for answers in an examination, combining marks for an examination and coursework, or combining marks for modules. How do we do that so that what is left is representative of the full information? There are no absolute rules - what is appropriate depends on the programme - but summing and averaging would only makes sense if marks were on an interval scale. There are three simple alternatives, and many others possible.

1. It might be that the component skills in different modules should all require a *minimum competence*, as seems appropriate in a driving test or medical training. In this case we might apply a threshold (or gateway) algorithm: if the student has not scored 40% in all elements they cannot pass the course. Such a requirement is common in modular programmes and is widely used where health or safety depend on competence.

2. We might use the median of module (median) marks as an indicator of *typical performance*.

3. We might wish to assess *best performance* and use the maximum mark. For example, one of us once ran the mile in under 4.5 minutes (though not recently!) although his average over all races was more than 5.5 minutes. If he had ever run it in under 3.5 minutes he would be widely recognized as the best mile runner ever. It is the best performance that is of interest. Outside sports, creative arts might be more interested in the best performance than in the minimum or typical.

There is no global solution - certainly not the mean of module means. Different assessments measure different things. For example, Figure 3 (right) shows the correlation between the marks students obtained for two essay questions in a closed examination, marked by the tutor. The correlation coefficient was only 0.32 (the coefficient of determination was only 10%) partly due to random variation in student performance and in assessment, and partly because the questions measure different skills. Simply taking the mean

of the two marks not only loses information, it generally gives a poor summary.
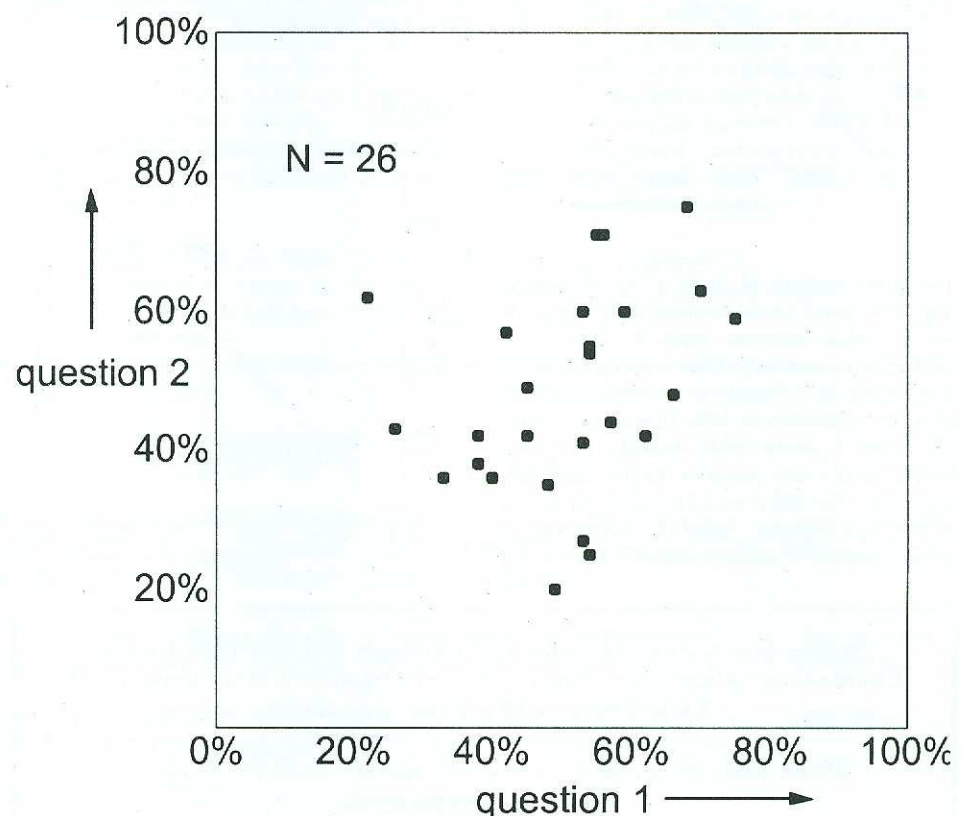
The advantage of transcripts and student profiles is that these pitfalls are avoided, and a richer picture of performance is provided. If a summary mark is necessary, it should reflect the learning outcomes, which is an educational decision, not a statistical one. The use or combination of minimum, median and maximum marks (e.g. minimum competence, typical performance, best performance, as above) should be driven by educational criteria. For example, an algorithm to award a distinction is "if the median of module marks is above 60% and the dissertation is above 70%".

Figure 3: Correlation Between the Marks Students Obtained for Two Essay Questions in a Closed Examination, Marked by the Tutor


N = 26

question 2

question 1 →

errors as teachers or assessors, a transcript must accurately reflect learning outcomes.

Nonetheless, an adjustment may be necessary so how should it be done? Adjusting marks should correct as far as possible for errors without simply giving all students the benefit of all doubt.

1. One approach maps module grades onto marks. So, while the norm may be that 'A' grades are obtained for 70% and above, in a particular module we may decide that they should be obtained for 80% and above, to compensate for an over-generous assessment instrument. The mapping of every grade can be adjusted individually – requiring decisions for each grade.

2. A second approach discards the marks from any module with differences in teaching or assessment before they are summarized. This requires care if there are many unreliable marks. The student profile will include some unreliable marks not included in the summary mark.

3. A third approach adjusts the percentage marks systematically. Here we recommend a transformation that leaves 0% and 100% unchanged and changes other marks in a linear way.

Figure 4
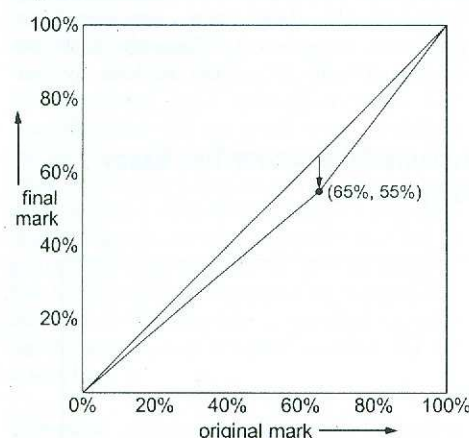
The first example of such a transformation (Figure 4 above) would be suitable for a module where typical students seem to have been marked too generously. Here a two-piece linear transformation is based on a median mark of 65% that is lowered to 55%. In a second example (Figure 5, above right), students, whom we believe should have passed a module, have failing marks. The fail threshold of 30% is moved to 40% in a two-piece linear transformation. In a third example we believe students who should
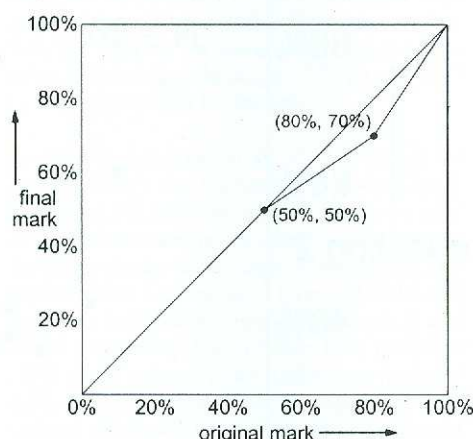
Figure 5
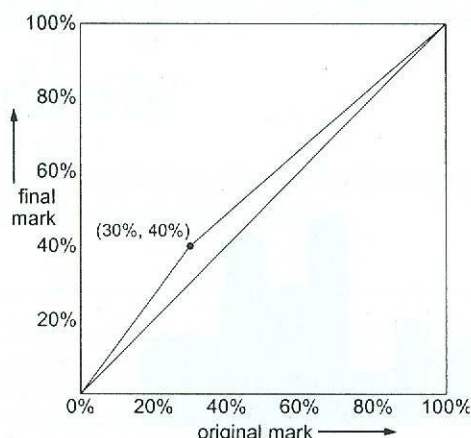
have received a mark of 70% have received 80% but do not want to affect students with the median mark or less. Figure 6 (below) shows a three-piece linear transformation that achieves this. (Example spreadsheets can be downloaded from http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/cs/Staff/Homes/Mdb3/papers/assess.htm)

We stress that these adjustments should not be used in any blanket way to make all modules have similar medians or means. Any adjustment should be carried out in the context of the programme outcomes once the causes of unusual raw assessment marks are understood.

References

Cuthbert, P (2001) Large student groups: techniques for monitoring marking. *Educational Developments* **2.2** 17-20

Siegel, S and Castellan, NJ (1988) **Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences.** New York: McGraw-Hill

Figure 6

Stephen Bostock is an Academic Staff Developer, and Mike Brough is the Examinations Officer of the Computer Science Department, at the University of Keele. Both have been External Examiners.

Please send any comments or feedback you have about this article to:

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The Embedding Learning Technologies Award:
A step towards a more flexible framework of professional development in higher education

When I was working as a tutor on a SEDA recognised teacher accreditation programme, I was asked by someone who had successfully completed the course "What can I do next?" At the time my response was limited as there was little on offer, beyond basic staff development workshops. Experienced staff had also approached me saying that they would like some recognition for the innovative developments they were doing in learning and teaching, specifically in the use of new technologies. A stray email (it was sent by mistake - honest) to the SEDA Mailbase list identified a number of like-minded people who believed that a structured professional development programme could be developed to meet the needs of these groups of staff.

That was over four years ago and after much discussion and negotiation the EFFECTS Project's Framework for Embedding Learning Technologies (ELT) has now been recognised under the SEDA Professional Development Accreditation (PDA) Framework.

The PDA Framework has been created to provide a general, flexible overarching accreditation framework for the recognition of programmes of professional development. As well as en-compassing existing schemes such as Teacher Accreditation and Professional Development in Higher Education (PDHE), there are a number of new awards being developed, for example Leadership, Student Support and Guidance, and Research Supervision.

This PDA Framework builds on the success of the SEDA Teacher Accreditation and Professional Development in Higher Education Schemes. Both of these have influenced and informed the evolution of Professional Development for staff in Higher Education as well as setting the standards for institutional pro-grammes. It is essential that we continue to influence and define the nature of staff and educational development.

The Embedding Learning Technologies Award

The ELT award is based on a development framework has been devised and tested by the five institutions in the TLTP3 EFFECTS consortium as well as programmes developed and evaluated in three further institutions. Six institutional programmes are initially being recognised under this award. There is also work in progress to develop programmes across institutions and through national bodies, to provide more flexible programmes to meet the needs of a wider range of staff.

The work of the EFFECTS Project has already demonstrated the benefits of structured pro-grammes that support and empower teams and individuals to embed learning technologies in their own context and encourage scholarship in learning and teaching. This is reflected in the underpinning principles of the award which aim to ensure that all recognised programmes con-tribute to organisational development and cultural change as well as to individual development.

Programmes recognised under the ELT award will benefit from having:

- a structured programme which maps to a national framework;
- accreditation which is portable between institutions;
- support for programme development of through networking with other programme leaders;
- access to the expertise and resources of the EFFECTS project.

Structure

The ELT award is flexible to allow recognition of a range of programmes appropriate to the needs of all staff involved in embedding learning technologies. Institutions, consortia or organisations should seek to encourage collaboration in the embedding of new technologies; and this is reflected in the values which underpin the award.

The award has been developed around a framework that promotes curriculum development and the embedding of learning technologies using a model of action learning. Programmes recognised under this award should support participants to undertake the action learning process by carrying out a genuinely innovative project which will produce tangible benefits not only for the member of staff but also for their students, department, institution, and colleagues.

Gaining recognition

The recognition process will be similar to other SEDA Schemes and will involve mapping the existing course criteria and outcomes to the ELT Award Outcomes and Values. Recognition will be undertaken by two recognisers appointed by SEDA. A training workshop will be provided for all programme leaders seeking recognition.

The Learning Outcomes

Participants must demonstrate:

1. Reflection on their own personal and professional needs, and in particular their continuing professional development;

2. The ability to use interpersonal, organisational and coping skills;

3. The ability to use their specialist knowledge and skills appropriately in the HE context, for example by:

3.1 Conducting a review of Communication and Information Technology (C&IT) in learning and teaching and showing an understanding of the underlying educational processes;

3.2 Analysing opportunities and constraints in using C&IT and selecting C&IT appropriate to the learning situation;

3.3 Designing a learning resource, programme or activity to integrate appropriate C&IT;

3.4 Implementing a developed strategy;

3.5 Evaluating the impact of the interventions;

3.6 Disseminating and embedded the findings of the evaluation.

Underpinning Values

Participants must demonstrate a commitment to:

- the experience of students;
- the learning experience of staff;
- the specific requirements of Higher Education;
- the pursuit of high quality;
- continued and informed reflection on and improvement of personal skills and professional practices;
- team working;
- working effectively with diversity.

Further Information

Programme leaders interested in seeking further information should contact:

Paul Bailey
Learning Technology Support Service
Institute for Learning and Research Technology
University of Bristol, 8-10 Berkeley Square
Bristol BS8 1HH

Tel: 0117 928 7152
Fax: 0117 928 7112
Email: Paul.Bailey@bristol.ac.uk

Dialogues
Workshops

What is that workshop timetable doing there?

The workshop is a key part of my practice as a developer. It's a while since I analysed why I plan and run workshops the way I do. So here's an example for us to study.

An ideal type? A perfect workshop?

No! Just a workshop.

Sounds interesting anyway. How can I help?

You could ask me why I planned that workshop the way I did, maybe ask me about my general principles for workshop design.

And?

I'll annotate the workshop plan with my answer to your questions.

Call that a dialogue?

Yes!

OK, then. Tell me, David, why have you planned this workshop in the way you have done?

The answers lie in the footnotes!

Staff development - strategies and methods [i]

Audience [ii]
Staff running educational development projects

Facilitated by [iii]
David Baume, Centre for Higher Education Practice, The Open University

Aim [iv]
To help participants develop the ability and the confidence to plan and run effective staff development workshops

Intended outcomes [v]
By the end of the workshop, participants should be able to:
1. Clarify staff development strategies and plans for their projects
2. Plan a staff development event.
3. With reasonable confidence run a staff development workshop.

Indicative timetable [vi]
14:00 [vii]   Introducing workshop purpose and process
14:10   Introductions by workshop participants [viii] :-
     Name, Project, Role, current staff development issues and concerns [ix]
14:20   Towards a staff development strategy for your project [x] - Worksheet [xi]
     - individual and small group working [xii]
14:35   Sharing staff development strategies - in plenary [xiii]
14:45   Staff development methods - short presentation [xiv] with handouts [xv, xvi]
14:55   Planning a staff development event - short presentation with handouts [xvii]
15:05   Action planning by participants [xviii]
15:25   Evaluation [xix]
15:30   Close [xx]

Footnotes on the workshop

i   Clear, simple, informative title.

ii   This helps people to see if the workshop is for them, and also reassures those who turn up.

iii   Lectures and presentations are given; seminars are led; workshops are probably best facilitated, although facilitation will probably also include both presentation and leadership.

iv   Aim - a simple account of the overall purpose of the workshop. This again helps people choose to attend the workshop or not. It further helps those attending to align themselves with what you hope that the workshop will achieve.

v   Intended outcomes (not all necessary classic learning outcomes) - what do you intend that participants will be able to do, think or feel by the end of the workshop?

vi   A timetable gives the facilitator a schedule to follow. It reassures the participants that there will be a structure and shape to the event, and thus that the facilitator knows what they are doing. "Indicative" indicates that the facilitator may, preferably in negotia-

tion with participants, depart from the timetable should this become advisable or necessary.

vii   This probably won't take as long as 10 minutes, but then the workshop may not start exactly on time.

viii   It is important that the participants know a little about each other.

ix   This is a very important step. The results, logged onto flipchart as they are spoken, can be used in at least three ways:

1) With a relatively small number of participants present, you can steer the workshop to meet their particular concerns within the overall aim and theme of the workshop. This may take you away from the timetable. Check that this is OK with participants.

2) You can use it as your checklist, telling individual participants when you think you are addressing a particular concern that they have expressed.

3) With a larger number of participants, or where this survey of their interests doesn't clearly steer the workshop in any particular way, you can invite participants to check that they are getting out of the workshop what they said they wanted.

x   This provides a common theme, and hopefully a task of common interest and value, which can bring together people of different backgrounds and interests and needs.

xi   Worksheets can provide a simple structure for tasks. The worksheet task will very likely not be completed during the workshop, although it should at least be started. If the worksheet provides a useful task, participants will complete it - preferably with colleagues - later.

xii   It is courteous and helpful to tell people at the start what processes you will be asking them to undertake.

xiii   The advantage of small group working is that everyone gets to participate, share and test and hear ideas. The trouble with small group working is that people don't hear what is said in the other groups. 'Small group followed by plenary' addresses both these needs.

xiv   Short presentations can get ideas across quickly and reasonably effectively.

xv   The use of handouts reduces the need for participants to write down what you say, and gives them time to think and plan in the workshop as well as some-

How did the workshop go?

Mixed. First, 90 minutes was far too short for such ambitious outcomes.

Or you tried to push too much into the 90 minutes you had.

Fair enough. Less content or three hours would have been nearer the mark.

Second?

There was a strong tension for me between following the published timetable and dealing with the many issues and concerns about staff development which participants brought up. Some of their concerns were really difficult. Asking participants at the start for their issues and concerns can lead to difficulties, as it did here, or it can work brilliantly. I've had both experiences on different occasions, and I don't yet fully understand why.

Maybe it goes less well when you can't deal with the questions they raise?

Thank you! But afterwards I received an email from a participant who has been asked by their Head of Department to run a workshop:

"It was with great trepidation that I approached this task as I have never done a staff development [event]. I used the handouts that you gave me [as] a framework to prepare the work. I have to say that thanks to your help the function was

a glittering success. ... I really do appreciate what you did to get me started off."

A happy ending, then?

For one participant, anyway!

David Baume FSEDA
Centre for Higher Education Practice
The Open University

This is based on a workshop and materials produced for the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund National Co-ordination Team Conference in May 2001. My thanks to the participants.

Responses to this dialogue, and suggestions for future dialogues, welcome.

**Please e-mail them to:
a.d.baume@open.ac.uk**

Commonly Used Acronyms

AISHE	All Ireland Society for Higher Education
FDTL	Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning
FSEDA	SEDA Fellowship Holder
GLTC	Generic Learning and Teaching Centre
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEFCW	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
HESDA	Higher-Education Staff Development Agency
ICED	International Consortium for Educational Development
ILT	Institute for Learning and Teaching
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
LTSN	Learning and Teaching Support Network
NTFS	National Teaching Fellowship Scheme
SHEFC	Scottish Higher Education Funding Council
SRHE	Society for Research into Higher Education
TLTP	Teaching and Learning Technology Programme
TQEF	Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund

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thing useful to carry away and use later.

xvi   This handout is a single page listing types of staff development events - workshop, seminar, demonstration - with a note on the main goals, methods, pros and cons of each type.

xvii   This handout is a series of nine questions, the answers to which describe a locally appropriate staff development event or process.

xviii   Without time to at least start to work out how they will apply workshop ideas to their own practice, participants may find the workshop somewhat unsatisfying.

xix   You need to do this to know what you should do differently in the next workshop you run. How to evaluate? If you're feeling brave, you can ask people whether they met the outcomes you (or they) set for the workshop. Or ask them for one way in which the workshop could have been better. Ask evaluation questions whose answers you (a) care about and (b) can act on next time.

xx   Always finish on time. Even if the participants don't want to. Informal discussions after the declared workshop end are fine.

SEDA Pre-Conference Workshop Day

Quality Assurance and Enhancement: the driving agenda

SEDA
STAFF AND EDUCATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

19th November 2001, The Manchester Conference Centre

A series of pre-conference workshops have been organised to take place on Monday 19 November. The aim of the day is to complement the main SEDA conference theme of 'developing the developers' by focusing on one particular aspect of our work - the relationship between quality assurance and enhancement. The workshops have been designed to:

- share information about current policy and practice
- provide an opportunity to reflect on the implications of the new agenda for our work
- recognise the new skills which may be needed
- enable participants to engage with others experiencing similar challenges in their current (and future) roles.

The workshops will be relevant to a wide range of colleagues involved in implementing and supporting changes in learning and teaching, including those in educational development units, staff in schools or departments with responsibilities for and / or an interest in learning and teaching (including Teaching Fellowship holders), learning support staff, academic registry and quality staff, pro-vice chancellors (learning and teaching) and anyone else who feels the 'quality' agenda is driving them.

The workshops will be presented by experienced colleagues from a variety of HE institutions, projects and organisations who are giving their time freely to this important aspect of our work, 'developing the developers' in order to better equip them to face the driving agenda of quality assurance and enhancement.

Further details of the sessions on offer will appear on the conference website as they are confirmed:

http://www.seda.demon.co.uk/manws.html

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6th Annual Conference for Staff and Educational Developers

Developing the Developers

professional enhancement for staff and educational developers

20th - 21st November 2001
The Manchester Conference Centre

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Conference Aim

The conference aims to build upon the success of previous annual SEDA conferences by providing an environment for participants to reflect upon and share ideas and practices related to delivering, planning, managing and researching educational and staff development.

The Conference

As with previous events, the format of the conference will comprise plenary sessions, along with a programme of parallel workshops, seminars and paper presentations. It will open at 10.00am on Tuesday 20th November and close at 4.30pm on Wednesday 21st November. This year's conference themes are as follows:

- strategic and policy contexts
- research and evaluation
- diverse roles and responsibilities
- preparing for / managing change
- skills for staff and educational developers
- models of staff and educational development
- the new 'profession(als)'

The plenary sessions will be led by **Professor Phil Race**, independent consultant, and **Carole Baume FSEDA**, Director of the TQEF National Co-ordination Team. This year's conference will be opened by **Professor Michael Harloe**, Vice Chancellor of Salford University.

Who Should Participate?

The conference will be of interest to all learning professionals: academic staff; library, learning centre and ICT staff; those involved in HEFCE initiatives such as FDTL projects and LTSN Subject Centres; Teaching Fellowship holders; managers of staff and educational development programmes and strategies.

Pre-Conference Workshop Day

As with last year's conference, the Monday before the main event will comprise a series of pre-conference workshops, under the title Quality Assurance and Enhancement: a driving agenda. These will be presented by experienced colleagues from a variety of HE institutions, projects and organisations and are designed to complement the main theme of the conference by focusing on one particular aspect of our work: the relationship between quality assurance and enhancement. More details can be found on page 27 of this issue.

Registration Details

Accommodation on-site is to 4* hotel standard and all bedrooms have en-suite facilities. Additional accommodation has been reserved in the nearby Palace Hotel. Delegates preferring to stay in the hotel should indicate this on their registration form. Full details on fees and copies of the registration form can be found on the conference website (details below) or can be obtained from the SEDA Office.

Conference Venue

Once again the conference will be held at The Manchester Conference Centre, a purpose built residential venue in the heart of the city centre. Accommodation on-site is to 4* hotel standard, with en-suite bedrooms. Additional accommodation has been reserved in the nearby Palace Hotel, where the Conference Dinner will also take place.

Manchester is well served by the motorway network and on-site parking is available. Piccadilly railway station is approximately 300 yards from the Conference Centre and there is a shuttle service from the station to the airport every 20 minutes.

For all the latest conference information see the conference website at:

http://www.seda.demon.co.uk/man01.html