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Principles to Support the Enhancement of Teaching and Student Learning:

Implications for educational developers

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Introduction

People who have a development role in higher education, like staff and educational developers, are fundamentally concerned with helping their colleagues and institutions enhance their practices, processes and results. But all of us involved in development work create our own personal and context-dependent conceptions of the meaning of enhancement. The recent consultation document produced by Universities UK, SCoP and the Higher Education Funding Council for England *HEFCE 01/45 'Quality Assurance in Higher Education'* outlines a vision for a new quality assurance framework that recognises the important and distinctive role of quality enhancement. While the paper elaborated in some detail the purposes and rationale for quality assurance (QA) it said next to nothing about the meaning and reasons for quality enhancement (QE). As John Biggs (2002) points out, QA processes are primarily for accountability in the contexts of fitness for and fitness of purpose. QA processes are generally not geared to notions of quality that are primarily about transformation where the imperative is to change and to learn through the process of changing.

There was general disappointment across the sector that more consideration had not be given to the role of enhancement in the proposals for a new quality review framework and a strong desire was expressed for this to happen (Johnson 2001). At the time of preparing this paper (January 2002) there is much discussion within and between national agencies and Funding Councils about how this might be achieved. By the time you read this we may know the outcomes of these discussions.

This contribution to *Educational Developments* has to be seen in this context. It is derived from papers and discussions arising from a public debate which Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) is facilitating in response to an invitation from Universities UK and Standing Conference of Principals (on-line at www.ltsn.ac.uk/enhancement).

The idea and practice of quality enhancement is associated with both regulatory and developmental processes. QE associated with QA is integral to the regulation of quality and standards and is essentially driven by the motive of public and professional accountability. There is a good level of understanding amongst HE communities, policy makers and government of the role QA plays in promoting QE. Enhancement is primarily through self- and peer-review and actions undertaken within formal and accountable frameworks of principles, expectations, obligations, processes

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and actions eg. in the QAA Handbook for Academic Review and HEFCE (2001) or institutional regulations and QA Handbooks. Increasingly, QE in QA processes is being driven by informal or formal benchmarking against what is considered to be generic good practice made explicit in codes, guidelines, policies and subject standards statements. In this way QA provides an environment within which QE is expected to happen albeit within a general culture of compliance.

Quality assurance clearly has a role to play in improving quality in higher education but to many HE teachers it often seems to divert attention away from the teaching and learning enterprise. Much of the effort and resource we invest in activities related to quality assurance is more concerned with providing evidence for accountability rather than developing capacity to improve.

The potential QE benefits from QA will only be achieved if QA processes engage people in thinking hard about what they are doing and why they are doing it. Once QA becomes routinised it looses its potency as an aid to self-review and development. The new QAA review process does ask quite searching questions about the promotion of student learning and there is the potential to use policies like programme specification, subject benchmarking and codes of practice within institutional review and design processes as an aid to professional discussion about teaching and student learning. But such processes must be facilitative and be motivated by a desire to improve. They will not work if all they seek is compliance.

Quality enhancement associated with personal or collective development, innovation and experimentation takes place all the time at all levels of the HE system. It fulfills a deep need for individuals, teams, departments and institutions to creatively exploit new opportunities or solve problems, to learn from existing good practice or to experiment with entirely new practice. It fosters a complementary set of behaviours and actions to that promoted by QA and that are equally important to a healthy, adaptive self-regulating HE system. This type of QE is motivated by cultures which value individuality, diversity, creativity, experimentation, innovation and which are tolerant of a certain amount of risk and failure.

There appears to be a significant gap in UK higher education between the desire for a culture that actively and systematically engages in enhancing teaching and student learning and a culture of compliance that tries to make people engage in such activities. There is a also a feeling that development-led enhancement appears unconvincing to politicians and Funding Bodies when set against the explicit frameworks for regulation. For these reasons LTSN set out to examine this form of QE more systematically and develop a set of principles to promote and explain the purpose and value of this voluntary form of QE and the ways and contexts in which it is achieved (LTSN 2001). Developing these principles (examples are included below for comment and development) would also help justify the significant institutional and system-wide investment to support the continuing enhancement of learning and teaching in UK HE.

What is quality enhancement and why do we do it?

Much of the work of educational developers is concerned with helping colleagues, departments and institutions change what they are doing. HE teachers understand the idea of enhancement as a change for the better. The concept of change can include the idea of enhancement but not all change leads to improvement. Change includes the process ideas of:

- making something different / transforming / converting
- replacing or exchanging
- or becoming different.

Enhancement is fundamentally about improving quality, adding value, augmenting or extending something. *QE is the deliberate process of change that leads to improvement.* This is the core concern of the educational developer.

But our perceptions of whether a change is an enhancement are bound up with the process of changing. They are highly personal and context dependent. Perceptions will be influenced by such factors as:

- reasons for change (imposed or self-determined)
- scale (quantity/amount of difference)
- quality (characteristics of difference)
- time (rate at which a difference is created eg. slow incremental or rapid radical).
- whether the benefits outweigh the investment made in terms of personal time and costs
- whether changing is a solitary or collaborative activity
- whether it is supported / unsupported
- whether it is valued by students, colleagues and managers.

Not surprisingly, the idea that a particular change is an enhancement is often contested. This creates difficulties when we come to objective evaluation. Evaluation is particularly difficult when changes happen in many different ways, for different reasons, in different contexts, at different rates, over different time scales and when the effects in one area start modifying practice, behaviour or thinking in another (the norm in any HEI or department!).

Physical changes or changes in conditions are usually easy to spot. Behavioural changes may or may not be easy to recognise but changes in thinking, attitudes and beliefs which may result in behavioural changes may not be easy to recognise and quantify. When personal factors are also taken into consideration - like self-awareness of the effects of change, personal experience and interpretations of cause and effect - it is not surprising that perceptions of change are unique to each individual experiencing it.

It is easier for individual HE teachers to understand enhancement in terms of change that results in improvement in a particular and personal context ie. we understand it through the direct experience of doing it and experience the results of doing it. Enhancement might involve:

- abandoning something that is not working
- doing existing things better / more efficiently
- making better use of something
- expanding something that is considered to be desirable
- adding new things to existing things
- connecting things to make different things
- doing entirely new things which replace or complement existing things
- or it might be an improved capacity to do something different or new in the future.

HE teachers make these sorts of changes all the time. It is part and parcel of being an effective and responsive teacher and perhaps the most important message to emerge from the QE debate is the affirmation (captured in the personal statements of two teachers below) of why HE teachers voluntarily engage in enhancing their own practice.

> 'I define the enhancement of my role as a teacher to be one of promoting deeper and better learning in my students. To achieve this I need to understand how they learn in different circumstances and teach accordingly.'

> 'I view enhancement as anything which adds extra dimensions or interest to my teaching ... Enhancement is anything that intensifies or increases the learning experience of my students.'

So the idea of quality enhancement in higher education is deeply embedded in a commitment to students, their learning and their educational experience. This is the key moral purpose for investing time, energy and resources in change in education (Fullan 1999).

In practical terms HE teachers seek to achieve this through:

- changes in the way they teach, promote and assess learning
- continually renewing and renewing the curriculum
- upgrading professional knowledge and skills
- and improving the broader educational, administrative and resource environments in which teaching and learning take place.

To achieve this purpose we need to continually improve our own understanding of how students learn in different contexts. Knowing this is the foundation to a culture in which QE directed at improving student learning thrives.

However, a second set of reasons for voluntarily engaging in QE has emerged through the public debate around the idea of improving the responsiveness of higher education to the ever-changing needs of society. This is reflected for example in the changes we continually make to our higher education programmes and teaching in order to enable more people with more diverse backgrounds and personal circumstances to participate in higher education, or to improve the employability prospects of our students, or to create more opportunities for people to learn throughout their lives.

This type of enhancement illustrates an important feature of QE. While few would deny that the improved capacity of a higher education institution to enable more people to benefit from the experience is an enhancement, individual academics struggling to cope with large teaching groups with more diverse backgrounds would perhaps question this in their context.

Different stakeholders will have different views on the legitimacy of enhancement-related activities undertaken in higher education. The notion of responding to the particular needs of different stakeholders is key to legitimising our actions. These might include for example responding to:

- students' learning needs and their experiences
- the different communities an institution serves
- the changing requirements of professions and employers
- changes in knowledge production.

Is enhancement a result, a product or a process?

At first glance this might seem obvious. If we enhance something we change its qualities and properties so we see the results as change. But the learning that is manifested in the enhanced product is derived through the experience of changing. Our capacity to disseminate and transfer 'enhanced practice' is fundamentally dependent on capturing the tacit knowledge from the experience of learning while doing. We do not seek simply to transfer the results. So we cannot omit the process of change from the idea of enhancement if we are to promote more general improvement.

An HE teacher would view enhancement in terms of the changes he or she makes in a particular learning context. For example, the rewriting of notes for a lecture, the incorporation of new material into a module or programme, the use of a new teaching or assessment method, the production of better information to guide students, or adjustments to administration procedures. Many teachers make these changes intuitively, but within this behaviour are a series of progressive and logical steps:

- evaluating the current situation and context
- creating the conditions for change
- implementing changes
- evaluating whether change has actually led to improvement.

In the act of teaching this might translate into:

- this isn't going too well, what can I do?
- I know, I'll try that
- yes that worked, I must remember that next time
- and then the inevitable replaying in the mind later.

This process of decision-action-reflection that underlies a real enhancement process bears a striking resemblance to the action-learning cycle of Kolb (1984) recently elaborated in the pedagogic context by John Cowan (*Educational Developments*, August 2001). It seems to me that voluntary participation in QE is driven by the same values that drive personal learning and the facilitating of the learning of others.

We must also acknowledge that there are forms of QE - 'the imaginative leap of faith' - that do not conform to this model and result in significant change without overt reflection that is grounded in experience, research or practice. Such transformations are often driven by external forces that require urgent response, but they can also be the product of imaginative thinking outside the mindsets we normally inhabit, and the willingness to take risks.

Scale and scope of QE

Enhancement embraces change at all scales from small and incremental to large and transformational.

> 'At a basic level, enhancement of quality involves examining what one is doing and as a consequence, making explicit aims, objectives and outcomes. At the next level, enhancement may involve making incremental changes so that teaching is more efficient or research more productive, while maintaining the current direction of each. At the third level, quality enhancement will involve doing things in new ways. The most radical forms of quality enhancement are those which involve transformational changes which call for a complete re-examination, reconceptualisation and re-direction of existing practice.' (Middlehurst 1997).

This conception of QE was originally developed by Professor Mantz Yorke and was adopted by the HEQC Quality Enhancement Group.

We engage in activities that we anticipate will lead to improvement but this may:

- be difficult to quantify particularly if changes are complex
- not be apparent for many years
- not actually happen
- lead to reduced quality in another area.

At the transformational (innovative) end of the spectrum enhancement-led actions involve experimentation and risk because there is no guarantee that they will improve on the current situation.

Striking the right balance

We improve the learning of students and their broader experience of higher education through a range of processes and actions that lie on a spectrum that embraces regulation, development and research.

- QE as *'improving what we do'* or *'making things better'* is associated with all parts of this spectrum.
- QE *'undertaken to assure quality and standards or deal with a related issue'* is associated with regulation.
- QE as *'innovative transformation or radical response to change in the external environment'* is associated with development.
- QE as *'a continuous process of self-determined adjustments to teaching and learning practice enacted by individuals'* is more closely allied to the values that underpin development but it is promoted as a virtue by regulatory bodies and processes that also seek such behaviours through compliance.
- QE as *'a process of change linked to evidence derived from pedagogic research'* is associated with the R&D part of the continuum but is culturally underdeveloped in the UK system.

There is within UK HE a large number of organisations, individuals (like staff and educational developers) and mechanisms which collectively encourage and help people and institutions to evaluate their practice and identify and enact ways of improving it. A map showing some of these organisational agents for enhancement is shown in Figure 1 (below).

The basic capacities embodied in this map are to promote enhancement through:

- policy, strategy and planning, and review mechanisms
- regulatory processes focused on standards and the quality dimensions of standards
- sharing and growing knowledge about teaching and learning, and facilitation of the use of such information as a resource for improvement
- research into all aspects of teaching and learning and ensuring that the outcomes of research inform practice.

These are all essential capacities for a large, complex self-regulating system whether it is the whole HE system or an institution. We must recognise that QE processes are associated with all of these capacities but they will differ in their nature, motivation and purpose. The goal for any HE system is to ensure that QE serves both the regulatory and developmental needs - striking the right balance is essential to the health and prosperity of the system. During the last decade we have placed considerable emphasis on the first two of these capacities. The current review of the QA framework and the increased public investment in infrastructure to support the enhancement of teaching and learning through development, and research (ESRC TLRP3) are indications that we are striving for a better balance and a more comprehensive and effective framework for supporting QE. The LTSN occupies a unique co-ordinating role in this framework of HE organisations. Its role is to try to connect different organisations and help co-ordinate enhancement initiatives.

Principles to promote QE

In trying to demonstrate that QE characterised in the same way that QA can there is a danger of reproducing the QA compliance model. To avoid it, we must promote and encourage enhancement through possibilities and opportunities rather than responsibilities and obligations such as are enshrined in codes of practice. Furthermore, any principles devised to promote enhancement will need to recognise and celebrate the infinite diversity of human endeavour and creativity in the field of teaching and support for student learning. They would also be founded on the premise that QE has to be connected to

Figure 1: Organisations and networks which support and promote quality enhancement in UK HE

The different approaches to QE can be grouped into one of four categories 1) strategic 2) regulatory 3) developmental 4) research. The primary mechanisms employed are: 1) policy and planning 2) action associated with regulatory review 3) actions through various developmental and evaluative processes 4) actions flowing from empirical research. Some bodies have remits that span more than one of these areas of activities. The primary focus of such agencies is indicated by bold type.

Strategic	Regulatory and standards setting bodies	Developmental	Research
Enhancement through policy initiatives and funding supporting strategic change	Enhancement by making explicit what is expected and how expectations are achieved	Enhancement through the development and use pf knowledge through projects, brokerage, collaborative networks, process benchmarking, action-research and other developmental activities	Enhancement through the development and diffusion of knowledge through empirical research
DfES Funding Bodies (England, Scotland, Wales and N Ireland) UUK SCOP	QAA TAA / OFSTED (Teacher ED) Statutory Regulatory Bodies **Professional Bodies** **ILT** HEIs **HESDA** SEDA **Ufi and e-university**	**LTSN** Funded initiatives NCT managed FDTL, TLTP, Innovation, NTFs ILT (R&D) HESDA **SEDA** HEDG HEIs - Ed Dev / Skills units Ufi and e-university Subject Associations and networks Professional Bodies **JISC Committees** **ALT**	ESRC Educational Research teams SRHE JISC Committees ALT SEDA

the values and beliefs that motivate people to change their own behaviour and practice in order to improve the learning and experience of their students. For this approach to have any meaning the principles would have to be accepted as being core to a good professional teacher in higher education. People with a developmental role in higher education have an important role to play in both shaping and promoting such principles, and those described below are offered to start the process of discussion and description.

General principles

- The primary goals of quality enhancement in higher education are to improve student learning and their learning experience, and to improve the responsiveness of HE to the needs and interests of society.
- The quality enhancement enterprise involves everyone who teaches, supports and guides students and who contribute to their broader HE experience. The many small things that people do to try to make things better can ultimately make an enormous difference to the learning and the experiences of students.
- We improve student learning by seeking to improve our knowledge of how students learn and by continually improving our teaching practices, the curriculum, and the broader educational, cultural, administrative and resource environments available to students and staff.
- Students are entitled to expect a learning experience which meets their needs, and which is underpinned by competent, informed and authoritative teaching and a supportive and enabling learning environment.
- Understanding how students learn is central to quality enhancement. The views of students on the ways we seek to improve their learning and experience are central to evaluating whether we have been successful.
- Staff are entitled to expect and to contribute to an institutional culture which values and rewards professionalism and scholarship, supports and encourages self-determined enhancement aimed at improving the learning experience of students and the environment for learning.

Teaching staff are encouraged to engage in enhancement because:

- self-determined improvement is a responsible and necessary professional activity
- the enhancement of student learning is rooted in the act of teaching and the design of learning opportunities. It fundamentally derives from teacher-student and teacher-teacher relationships and interactions
- the way students learn is crucial to any improvement strategy. Enhancement of teaching needs to be driven by better knowledge of how students learn in each discipline.

Institutional and departmental cultures which encourage their staff to participate in enhancement-related activities:

- view enhancement holistically as a way of making learning better for students and teachers
- promote and value self-reflection, evaluation and research that is related to the practice of teaching and the support of student learning as a means of identifying the potential ways in which improvements can be made
- publicly value the efforts of individual staff, teaching teams, and task groups who are engaged in enhancement and support their efforts with the necessary resources and professional expertise
- provide opportunities for professional dialogue about teaching and learning and opportunities for professional development for all their staff
- are likely to develop strategies and plans that address the wider concerns of enhancement as well as locally determined priorities
- are likely to have the capacities to research and evaluate the impact of teaching on student learning in order to determine whether change needs to be made and to determine whether changes in policy and practice do effect improvement
- are likely to have the capacities to identify effective practice and to understand why such practice is effective in a particular context, and to have the capability to support the spread of such practices to other contexts
- are likely to draw upon the resources and support of national bodies with responsibilities for supporting HE communities in improving learning and teaching.

To make an effective contribution to a culture which values and supports quality enhancement, national bodies with responsibilities for creating and supporting change and improvement in higher education will need to:

- develop and demonstrate in their actions a sophisticated appreciation of the complexity of enhancement-led change and be sensitive to the difficulty of measuring and defining precisely the results of such change, particularly changes which will take many years to see the real impact
- have the capacities to develop new knowledge about teaching and learning by facilitating the sharing of ideas and practices
- have the capacities to disseminate information on practice that is known to be effective in particular circumstances and to support HE communities in transferring practices that are known to work in one context to other contexts
- plan and coordinate their actions to optimise the support they can give to HE communities and institutions
- provide resources to support strategic and local change aimed at the primary goals of QE
- create opportunities for professional dialogue about teaching and learning and opportunities for professional development for teaching staff
- develop the capacities to research changes that result from new educational policies in order to evaluate their impact and determine whether change has resulted in improvement. However they must recognise that the evaluation of enhancement-led change is not a precise science and a formative rather than summative approach is more useful to HE communities
- have the capacities to facilitate the transfer of research evidence of what works best in a particular context.

Concluding comments

Regardless of any principles we may fabricate, voluntary participation in any enhancement process is fundamentally about personal beliefs and values and a commitment to self-improvement in spite of all the obstacles, high work loads and pressures to do other things. Educational developers witness this on a daily basis as they interact with teachers who care passionately about their teaching. People who put such beliefs into practice ultimately create the cultures within which committed and caring teachers and other members of the HE community feel that their individual efforts to enhance their practice are valued. Educational developers are uniquely placed within HE institutions to work across all dimensions of QE (policy/strategy, regulation, development and research) and to connect their colleagues to relevant external support and information such as that provided by LTSN Subject Centres. Similarly the established professional networks for developers (SEDA and HEDG) play a key role within the national infrastructure for promoting and supporting the QE enterprise. The current expansion of this infrastructure and the progressive shift to a quality review framework which places more emphasis on QE provides educational developers with new opportunities to influence and support their own communities.

Continuing the discussion

Six educational developers (Ranald Macdonald, David Gosling, Liz Dunne, Malcolm Shaw, Martin Oliver and Vaneeta D'Andrea) contributed directly to the LTSN facilitated discussion on QE. If you would like to extend the ideas in this paper or comment on the principles and their value to you and your institution please forward your comments to the author.

Acknowledgements

LTSN is very grateful to everyone who contributes to this on-going discussion. A full list of participants in the initial debate, together with the personal statements they provided can be found at www.ltsn.ac.uk/enhancement.

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Biography

Norman Jackson began his professional life as a geology teacher and researcher. He is currently a Senior Professional Advisor in the Learning and Teaching Support Network Generic Centre and a Senior Research Fellow in the School of Educational Studies at the University of Surrey.

Prior to joining LTSN he held Assistant Director posts in the Development Directorate of the Quality Assurance Agency and the Quality Enhancement Group of the Higher Education Quality Council.

HEFCE Announce £92 Million to Support High Quality Teaching

In their February 2002 Council Briefing HEFCE announced that the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF) will be continued over the next three years (up to 2004-05), with £92 million to provide continuing support for learning and teaching covering the following activities:

- Existing FDTL and TLTP projects - £4 million
- Subject development (FDTL phases 4 and 5 - £13 million
- Institutional learning and teaching strategies - £50 million
- National Teaching Fellowships - £3 million
- Learning and Teaching Support Network - £20 million
- Co-ordination and evaluation of TQEF - £2 million.

The Briefing goes on to remind readers that the there are three main strands TQEF funding:

- institutional - to support universities and colleges as they implement strategies for raising standards in learning and teaching
- subject - the Learning and Teaching Support Network, a network of 24 subject centres and a single Generic Centre, and the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL)
- individual - the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme, which is administered by the ILT.

In order to receive funding from the institutional strand, HEFCE will be inviting institutions to submit revised learning and teaching strategies and action plans by **28th June 2002.**

Useful links to the above:

HEFCE Council Briefings
www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/CBrief

National Co-ordination Team for the FDTL and TLTP
www.ncteam.ac.uk

National Teaching Fellowships
www.ntfs.ac.uk

Learning and Teaching Support Network
www.ltsn.ac.uk

International Conference Announcements

STLHE Conference 2002
Fostering the Spirit of Inquiry
12-15 June 2002
Hamilton, Ontario
www.mcmaster.ca/learning/stlhe2002/

4th World Conference of ICED
Spheres of Influence: ventures and visions in educational development
3-6 July 2002
Perth, Western Australia
www.csd.uwa.edu.au/iced2002/

HERDSA Conference 2002
Quality Conversations
7-10 July 2002
Perth, Western Australia
www.ecu.edu.au/conferences/herdsa

TLHE Symposium 2002
Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
4-6 September 2002
Singapore
www.cdtl.nus.edu.sg/tlhe/

Editorial - From My Perspective

(A guest editorial from Shân Wareing, writing as a Head of an Educational Development Unit)

This is my first post in a pre-1992 university, and I was initially wary that teaching might be lower on the agenda here because research was higher. After 18 months, I've come to the conclusion that staff attitudes here are similar to those in other institutions, ranging in a normal distribution pattern from those who are insatiably enthusiastic about developing their teaching to those who avoid educational development at all costs.

At the end of 2001, the Research Assessment Exercise loomed large. Royal Holloway, having c.5500 undergraduates and c.1000 postgraduates, is a member of the '94 Group', comprising the smaller research intensive higher education institutions. Royal Holloway saw an improvement on its position in the UK research league tables, so some large grins were observed on even the usually glummest professorial faces, and a few days were happily spent playing with the results to show our performance compared to other colleges our size, other universities with an 'H' in their name, other universities with the same proportion of old paintings to staff aged 34-50, and so on. But if the RAE has been high on the College's agenda, what's high on the Educational Development Centre's 'to do' list for 2002, and what do the five and a half people in Royal Holloway's EDC talk about over our coffee?

The future of external quality assurance and QAA occupies our discussion regularly. We operate some of the internal quality assurance systems, and the external systems were the 'big stick' behind many of our internal activities, so we watch with bated breath in case the role of 'bad cop' shifts from QAA onto us.

The EDC is involved in developing the proliferating institutional strategies. We're represented on the Human Resources Strategy Steering Group, which will be submitting a full strategy to the funding council by June 2002, on Teaching Committee, which overseas the implementation of the Teaching Strategy, and on the Steering Groups for Learning and Technology and for Widening Participation. One of the questions for this year is: 'Can we get our institutional strategies all joining up?' What will happen when the human resources strategy meets the learning and teaching strategy, meets the widening participation strategy, meets the information strategy? Will they link into a seamless whole, echoing the College Mission, and be replicated in a myriad of departmental strategies? That's the plan, but the best-laid plans... We are increasingly integrated with the College's systems, including the probation process and the initial evaluation of proposed new programmes. This gives us the opportunity to think holistically about our activities, although the fallout is there is more to do than there is time to do it in, of course.

Progress files also loom large. Of the whole Dearing agenda, this is possibly the biggest change with the farthest reaching implications. The progress files discussions have made me realise the extent to which some parts of higher education have changed radically in the last 5-10 years, and other parts have remained untouched by the frantic activity elsewhere. This is the one that, if it comes off, will have to be implemented by individual lecturers thinking about how individual students learn. It won't be just a better paper trail kept by a conscientious administrator in a departmental office. For this reason, I'm concerned to watch and see what happens at the institutions further ahead than ours - although also aware that given the size of the undertaking, we can't afford to be too far behind. The approach we're taking is to ensure the personal advisor system, which already exists in every department, is genuinely working effectively. The second element, happening at the same time, will be to review the skills components of the curriculum, and ensure these are comprehensive, show progression year by year, and are observed in practice. How students keep records will be a matter to deal with later, when we've watched what happens with paper-based vs. electronic recording systems, when MLEs have a couple more years to evolve, and after a planned SEDA event on Progress Files in May this year.

The EDC includes learning and technology in its remit, and this is perhaps the area which most occupies our coffee breaks. We are watching to see what the e-university gets up to in the next few months. Internally, we are approaching learning and technology from two angles at once. We have technical questions about which products can deliver what we want, are stable and reliable, and can be linked to other products (will the email system talk to the virtual learning environment, will the latter share data with student records? Should programme specifications be held in a data base that links to student transcripts? Can we find ways to minimise the number of logins and passwords students and staff need to use to pick up their emails, access their courses and their library records?) Alongside these issues we have another set: will students and staff on campus use communication tools effectively? Can learning technology address integral pedagogic issues within a wide range of courses so effectively that even if the software package available changed, students and staff would still want the same functions to be available to them? Can the EDC and Information Services staff work with academic colleagues to ensure there are models of good practice of learning technology being used for on-campus teaching in all departments? I suspect like many establishments, the interest, skills and take-up of learning technology across the College is quite uneven. In this area, the variables which are out of our control make this the most exciting, the most high risk, the place where the biggest prizes are on offer and the deepest pits menace. Like other places, I suspect, sometimes we feel behind the curve, and sometimes maybe we aren't doing too badly, given the scale of changes involved.

As a new Centre (we were established with Teaching Quality Enhancement funding in 2000), we are still setting up functions which colleagues elsewhere will have had for years. We're currently in the anomalous position of having more provision for our graduate students who teach than for our newly appointed lecturers. An accredited teaching & learning programme for lecturers is planned for September 2002 and we think we have the College's support in making it a compulsory part of probation for new staff! Whether new staff will have time allowed in their teaching/research requirements to participate in the programme, and whether successful completion will be required to pass probation, are questions still to be resolved.

Other priorities for those coffee chats include our external networking activities, talking to our educational development colleagues in other institutions in the region, talking to the subject centres, especially the English Subject Centre, which is based at Royal Holloway, and talking to the national bodies, including SEDA. We're hoping the 100th Royal Holloway ILT member will pay their membership fee soon, 99 had been accepted by ILT at the last count, which for a small, research-intensive College seems not too bad.

Biography

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SEDA
STAFF AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

A Review of the Institutional Impact of Recently Appointed Teaching Fellows

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Abstract

Following the initial appointment of four Teaching Fellows at the University of Hertfordshire in February 2001, this paper sets out to examine the change in institutional culture that these appointments have made. It identifies how the Fellows have brought a renewed focus to matters related to teaching and learning from within their own departments and how they have contributed to raising the profile of teaching and learning within the university as a whole. Although it is premature to evaluate the direct impact on student learning, early indications are that it is a positive step in the right direction.

Introduction

The first four Teaching Fellows at the University of Hertfordshire (UH) were appointed in February 2001, in line with the guidelines set out by the Institute for Learning and Teaching, (ILT) in 1998 for identifying excellence in learning and teaching. These criteria for selection are given below. This paper also sets out to examine the role of the Teaching Fellow at UH, the differences their roles have made so far and how their appointments have acted as a catalyst for promoting renewed interests in teaching and learning. This applies to both their own faculties as well as to the remaining faculties who are yet to have Teaching Fellows appointed. As it happens the four Fellows appointed so far are all from different faculties of the university (Art and Design, Engineering and Information Sciences, Humanities, Languages and Education and Health and Human Sciences) and had followed very varied career paths prior to their recent appointments. In spite of this diversity of backgrounds, there have been some definite similarities in their experiences of the post so far. For example, for each of them there have been the same questions following their appointment. "What is a Teaching Fellow and what difference will it make to your position within your department?"

What is a Teaching Fellow?

The term Fellowship is generally defined to be a member of a learned society eg. a university, or as in our case a group of people with the same interests. However, US literature seems to suggest a different interpretation of the term. It is usually applied to research / developmental opportunities for undergraduates and newly appointed graduates, suggesting an apprentice / assistant type role rather than that of the expert adviser. In the UK and specifically at UH the new role of a Teaching Fellow is generally viewed as being on a par with the academic role of a Reader. At the University of Hertfordshire the interpretation of a fellowship is closely linked to the ILT criteria for excellence in teaching and conferment of the title is subject to proof of professional excellence in teaching and learning skills. The roles and responsibilities are embedded in the University's policies and regulations (UPR'S) - see below.

The Fellowship applications and selection are based around these criteria which are subject to validation both internally and externally and are dependent on substantial portfolio evidence by prospective candidates.

The ILT Criteria

The criteria for excellence in Teaching as suggested by the Institute for Learning and Teaching (available from http://ntfs.ilt.ac.uk/criteria_2001.htm) and given below are a good starting point for investigating how a Teaching Fellow can contribute to raising the profile of teaching and learning in his/her department and faculty and then beyond. Like the ILT, the Fellows also recognise that this is not an exhaustive or all-inclusive list:

> University of Hertfordshire Definition from the University's Policies and Regulations
>
> 'PURPOSE OF FELLOWSHIPS IN LEARNING AND TEACHING
>
> The purpose of Fellowships in Learning and Teaching is:
>
> i to promote learning and teaching;
>
> ii to raise the profile of learning and teaching at the University;
>
> iii to improve the quality of the student learning experience;
>
> iv to provide career progression routes for members of the academic staff who, in addition to the other duties of their contract, wish to develop further and to specialise in the area of learning and teaching as well as in research, consultancy or administration.'
>
> © University of Hertfordshire Higher Education Corporation (2000)

The ILT proposes that "An excellent teacher may demonstrate:

- innovation in the design and delivery of learning activities;
- the ability to organise course materials and present them effectively and imaginatively;
- the provision of effective and sympathetic guidance, supervision and assessment of students, that will enable student advancement at all levels;
- a reflective approach to teaching and the support of learning in order to sustain self-development;
- the ability to arouse curiosity and to stimulate independent learning and the development of critical thought in students;
- a recognised commitment to the scholarship of both subject knowledge and learning and teaching;
- participation in professional activities and research related to learning and teaching;
- recognition of the value of student diversity;
- the ability to share and promote good practice, through publications, conferences, workshop or other means."

Making a difference

In identifying what a Fellow has already achieved, both the ILT and UH criteria can answer some of those questions set by other colleagues, such as "What does it mean to be appointed as a Teaching Fellow?" These criteria are fine as far as they go in considering the historical approach to the appointment of the Fellows.

However, the more important question here is in terms of what proven excellence in teaching and learning can lead to and how the Fellows can influence the culture and goals of their own institution in measurable ways. Consequently, in addition to having met the ILT criteria prior to their appointment, the Fellows have also agreed departmental, faculty and institutional action plans for their roles, which are ongoing and reviewed biannually. The latter question can be answered in two ways. Firstly, there is the synergy of the peer group or as we preferred to call it a 'Forum of Teaching Fellows'; a regular meeting of recognised equals who share common interests and can achieve collectively within their roles, more than those individuals can achieve within their faculties single handedly. This has been one of the initial foci of activity for the Fellows as they seek to define their own role within the university context and move beyond their traditional spheres of influence in their departments and faculties. It is interesting to note that whilst the notion of peer review in higher education remains a contentious issue at present, the evolving model from this group is one of support, mutual respect and willingness to share good practice.

The second answer is shown in the form of a metaphor. By taking as an example, yeast and its use in bread making it can be seen that a small amount of yeast is used to transform the whole piece of dough. The yeast thus affects the nature of the dough and changes the flour and water mixture right through into something different. How can this analogy be explained in these particular circumstances? Just a very few Fellows, at the moment, can have a wide-ranging and generally predictable effect on the role of teaching and learning within the whole institution. This has already happened through the introduction of the role itself, which has created a renewed interest and enthusiasm for changing, and reviewing current practices in teaching and learning. Although individual fellowship activities have initially remained faculty focused, a second phase of cross-faculty sharing of specialist expertise is emerging. Specialist interest in subjects such as e-learning and reflective practice has been shared and promoted initially as exchange activities between faculties, under a 'twinning' scheme between Fellows. In doing so a wider audience has been reached than was previously possible through the limited sphere of influence of individual academics. With the appointments of more Fellows in the future we anticipate a greater involvement for all the Fellows in leading teaching and learning events throughout the university.

The evolving roles of the Teaching Fellows

The Fellows started off by identifying and sharing common issues arising from their individual departmental and faculty responsibilities for Teaching and Learning. This initial phase has widened discussion and provided a forum for exchanging ideas and cascading proven successes in learning and teaching. Since then the Teaching Fellows' Forum has provided an opportunity for the four current Fellows to meet on a regular basis to discuss their views of teaching and learning and its promotion from the inside out, ie. from within their own faculties out to each others' faculties. This approach was perceived to be a non-threatening way to bring about innovation and change in the university culture, as well as a realistic and manageable strategy to accommodate their other day to day departmental responsibilities.

The next step was to identify a cross-faculty sharing of seminars and teaching successes so that other colleagues could benefit from the expertise of Fellows from different faculties. These 'twinning activities' continue to be promoted to a wider audience in the university via faculty learning and teaching committees. Although a piecemeal strategy was adopted initially it has proved beneficial in highlighting how different faculties tend to concentrate on their own tried and tested ways of teaching and learning. This in turn has helped the Fellows to better manage potential resistance to change in learning and teaching approaches.

From the recent experience of the Fellows themselves we conclude that departments may well benefit by enlisting support from a colleague who is known to be a recognised expert but from a different academic area eg. discussing the value of reflective practice within Computer Science courses and promoting e-learning skills with health related disciplines. By the very diversity of their previous experiences the Fellows themselves have discovered a valuable 'cross department' fertilisation of ideas as different teaching and learning environments have been shared between them.

Changing cultures

What has been the impact of the appointment of the Teaching Fellows so far? Undoubtedly the chief benefit has been in raising the profile of teaching and learning within the institution. The promotion of the Fellows has given credence to the idea that an equal career path exists for Learning and teaching alongside the more traditional research pathway. It has served to enhance the institutional strengths, policies and regulations in teaching and learning and to provide a forum for discussion of issues at faculty and departmental levels. Altogether this approach encourages a culture of promoting excellence in teaching and learning and the recognition of good teachers.

In considering the wider benefits to the university it is crucial to retain the expertise of the Fellows in the source department so they are not promoted out of their sphere of specialist influence. This means they can continue to contribute actively to further curriculum and staff development activities, for example by acting as role models and mentoring new staff. From the Fellows' own experiences, they have been seen as departmental experts in teaching and learning matters and as a local resource for ideas and contacts with other colleagues.

From the perspective of the wider institution, an additional catalyst for the Fellows' activities has been the university's introduction of its own managed learning environment (MLE). As the prototype is rolled out to the new students in the current academic year 2001/2002 it will have a major impact on the role of the academics in the university and the way they approach the content of their teaching. The MLE has served to concentrate the minds of those colleagues unfamiliar with using technology in teaching to reconsider how they can use the new tool to transform their own teaching. In the same way it is expected to transform the students' attitude to their learning. As part of a recent internal university conference to introduce the MLE to the wider audience of academics, two of the Fellows led seminars from their individual but complementary perspectives ie. technical and pedagogical. This is one specific example of how the introduction of the Teaching Fellow's role has immediately raised the profile of the individuals beyond their previously limited departmental contributions.

Teaching and learning

It may seem ironic that much of the emphasis so far has focused on the teaching role. This is because currently it is easier to define the effect that the appointment of the Fellows may have on their colleagues in terms of changing attitudes to teaching instead of affecting the nature of the student learning process. This remains the central goal and will undoubtedly be an on-going issue. One example of how it will be addressed is in the implementation of the MLE, as it is further developed and introduced to all students in the following academic years. Other long-term goals include collaboration with curriculum developments and innovations such as the Hertfordshire Integrated Learning Project (HILP) - www.herts.ac.uk/envstrat/HILP/ - which is concerned with skills development and transfer.

Measuring the profile of the individual Fellows and the increased effect the role has had on the institution is inevitably rather subjective. A range of increased activity and input at all levels, departmental and faculty can be demonstrated via agreed action plans. Whilst it is too easy to rely on personal anecdote and immeasurable opinions, one thing is clear, that over the past nine months the Fellows have sought to develop their roles with their customary enthusiasm for teaching and sharing best practice. They have become involved with a range of activities, which have collectively raised the profile of teaching and learning within the university and proved to be an effective ' yeast' in the way they have pervaded and raised the role of teaching and learning within their institution.

The way forward

In reflecting on their progress so far and evaluating their current contributions the Fellows are now considering a future strategy for strengthening their collective and individual roles in learning and teaching. In the short term this will partly be determined by a number of evaluation strategies at departmental, faculty and university wide levels.

This institution has already set in progress the next round of processing applications for more Teaching fellows and has the stated aim in its Teaching and Learning strategy document to increase the number of Fellows year by year, whereby suitably qualified and experienced staff may put themselves forward for selection. The alignment of the award of a Teaching Fellowship at UH with the nationally recognised grade of Readership has clearly served to increase the kudos of the appointment. In the opinion of the authors this has given those with a commitment to teaching and learning, recognition and credibility amongst their peers, and for those seeking to apply in the future a definite focus for their career path.

A Developer's Guide to Major National Initiatives - Part Five

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. In 2.3, Sarah Porter described some of the work of JISC in developing and supporting managed learning environments

Here, in the first of a series of two articles, Caroline Ingram of the JISC / DNER outlines what the DNER and Information Environment is, and then offers an overview of the current and future development programmes.

JISC / DNER Development Programmes

Caroline Ingram
Learning and Teaching Programme Manager, JISC / DNER

The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) has responsibility for the provision of a network, data services and resources to the whole of the UK's higher and further education communities.

This is the first in a series of two articles. This article outlines what the DNER and Information Environment is, and then offers an overview of the current and future development programmes. The second will give full detail and references to the projects underway.

The Information Environment is about providing real resources to real students now, in ways that appeal to them and those who teach them.

What is the DNER?

The most common question asked, and the simple answer is that "the Distributed National Electronic Resource (DNER) is a managed environment for accessing quality assured resources on the Internet". Such resources include information and learning 'content' and there are networked services that make such content available.

Within the DNER, content is typically managed and made available in the form of a variety of collections. Some comprise primary content maps, monographs, textbooks, journals, manuscripts, music scores, still images, geospatial and other kinds of vector and numeric data, moving picture and sound collections, etc. Others comprise metadata - library OPACs (On-line Public Access Catalogues), subject gateway Internet resource catalogues, abstracting and indexing services, etc.

Collections of content within the JISC are brought together based on different criteria, and according to their perceived value to the higher and further education communities. Collections may have a subject focus (eg. a collection of items relating to geography), others may have a 'media-type' focus (eg. a collection of digital images). As currently manifest, the DNER is a managed set of collections, each delivered through a JISC funded content service provider (eg. EDINA - Edinburgh Data and Information Access, MIMAS Manchester Information and Associated Services, etc.) or by a third party service. In order to interact with each collection, the end-user (eg. learner, teacher, information professional or researcher) must navigate the Web interface offered by each particular content service provider. There is little opportunity for searching or browsing across multiple collections. End-users with a subject interest may need to interact with several collections of different types, each through a new interface. Those with wider interests, particularly from FE, may well need to interact with collections of different types across several subject areas.

The Information Environment

To overcome this need to interact with several collections the current development of the DNER focuses on presenting resources in an integrated environment. This information environment must be fit to serve the needs of students, teachers and researchers in further and higher education into the future. The development of a robust and appropriate platform to provide access to educational content for learning, teaching and research purposes is a key component of the JISC five year strategy, which includes a commitment to: "build an on-line information environment providing secure and convenient access to a comprehensive collection of scholarly and educational material".

It is worth noting that the DNER is a part of a wider resource that includes the content made available by UK HE and FE institutions, content made available though other national initiatives (some of which have already been described by this series of articles) and Internet resources more generally. The DNER architecture behind the information environment should, as far as possible, be able to provide seamless access to this fuller range of resources.

Goals for the JISC / DNER Information Environment

The JISC/DNER Strategy indicates that the Information Environment should:

- Be fit to serve all kinds of digital content
- Fully support the submission and sharing of research and learning objects (digitised learning resources that can be reused)
- Provide a range of meaningful and innovative methods of accessing electronic materials, to enrich learning and research processes
- Be a collaborative landscape of networked national service providers who work together to seamlessly cater for the needs of the community
- Be underpinned by interoperability, based on a common standards framework.

A collaborative environment

The DNER development is part of a national and global agenda for developing environments for lifelong learning. Other initiatives, in the UK particularly the People's Network, the National Grid for Learning, and the Research Grid are, like the JISC's Information Environment, intending to provide information and resources for new generations of adult learners who will increasingly rely on accessing information and training through virtual environments. The JISC/DNER strategy recognises that working in partnership with other agencies is key to developing the information environment.

One of the fundamental issues of building national and international environments for accessing shared educational content is the recognition that these activities need to be based on common standards to ensure maximum possibility for exchange of resources. These apply to creation, access, use, preservation and interoperability of networked resources. In order to progress this process, the DNER development team have produced a set of standards and guidelines intended to underpin the Information Environment and to support the activities of current and future development programmes. Moreover the DNER team are actively participating in the process of sharing and building standards for educational resources in a national and international context.

Current development programmes

Development activity is essential for the JISC across all of its various initiatives and programmes, as it defines the process for moving forward and allows appropriate investment to take place. The JISC's development activity is clearly pivotal for a leading edge initiative such as the information environment. It is also worth noting that the Information Environment rests upon a conceptual and abstract framework that is somewhat in advance of what it is currently possible to offer to students and teachers who access digital resources.

However, as it aims to stay 'ahead of the game', the JISC needs to provide active evidence of what the landscape of the future will look like. As stated above, the Information Environment is about providing real resources to real students now, and in ways which appeal to them and those who teach them. It demonstrates the range of significant services and resources funded by the JISC to a diverse constituency of users, while starting to provide evidence, particularly to teachers and information mediators, of the validity of new approaches. For example, development projects allow teachers to interact with demonstrators which show the potential of the new range of services envisaged and the power of searching a diverse range of information resources.

Developments for learning and teaching

Current JISC/DNER development programmes include a Learning and Teaching Programme, and an Infrastructure Programme, both aimed at building an easy to use information environment for learning teaching and research. The Programmes, described in detail below, are undertaking development for both HE and FE. They arose out of the need to integrate learning environments with the wider information landscape aimed at increasing the use of on-line electronic information and research datasets in learning and teaching processes. Following the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), funds were allocated to the JISC to improve the applicability of its collections and resources for learning and teaching in higher education (L&T Programme). JISC also allocated funds, as part of the ongoing development of the information environment, to an initiative enhancing the infrastructure of JISC Services to support the DNER (Infrastructure Programme).

Requests for proposals were initially circulated to JISC services, projects converting to services and projects in support of development of services in order to enhance JISC services to take part in an information environment, or to enhance current JISC activities for learning and teaching. The projects funded under this initiative have been incorporated into the main two Programmes.

Development activity for learning and teaching purposes should enable some of the goals above to be met and the products offered through JISC services to be used in different ways than originally envisaged.

Useful Web Links

JISC
www.jisc.ac.uk

DNER
www.jisc.ac.uk/dner

People's Network
www.peeoplesnetwork.gov.uk

National Grid for Learning
www.ngfl.gov.uk

Research Grid
www.research-councils.ac.uk/ostinformatics/

Resource Discovery Network development projects
www.rdn.ac.uk

EDNER
www.mmu.ac.uk/h-ss/cerlim/edner/welcome.html

JUSTEIS study
www.dil.aber.ac.uk/dils/research/justeis/jisctop.htm

ICONEX project
www.iconex.hull.ac.uk

BECTA
www.becta.org.uk

X4L service
www.jisc.ac.uk/pub02/c02_02.html

National Learning Network
www.nln.ac.uk

INSPIRAL
inspiral.cdlr.strath.ac.uk

Learning and Teaching Programme

The Learning and Teaching Programme has the following complimentary aims:

- To enhance service provision and re-orient it to provide for learning and teaching.
- To carry out research on the information environment.
- To enhance access to networked resources through research and development into the semantic challenges posed by achieving interoperability of information resources.

The projects are clustered according to media type (images, moving image and sound) or aim of project (enhancing JISC data services and access to L&T or museum resources). Details of current projects will follow in Part 2 of this article in the next edition of *Educational Developments*.

Infrastructure Programme

The Infrastructure Programme was funded to contribute to the technical infrastructure of the Information Environment. The projects involved are clustered in three areas: z-projects (investigating use of the search protocol Z39.50), Article Infrastructure Services (or 'Join-Up', concerned with enhancing access to serials and articles) and the Resource Discovery Network development projects (improving and increasing access to quality Internet resources for the learning, teaching and research community using the RDN). Most RDN projects are building subject specific portals.

Again full details of projects in this area will be available in the 2nd article in this series.

Formative evaluation

The JISC has also funded a formative evaluation of its current development projects, with a special focus on the pedagogical value of the resources being created for learning and teaching described above. The EDNER (Formative Evaluation of the DNER) project is led by the Centre for Research in Library and Information Management (CERLIM) at the Manchester Metropolitan University, in partnership with the (CSALT Centre for the Study of Advanced Learning Technologies), Lancaster University. The project will also examine the impacts of the DNER on learning and teaching, the development of the DNER services, particularly the subject portal services in development at RDN hubs. As a formative evaluation, the project is operating iteratively, examining processes, progress and impacts and helping other projects to focus their work within the development of the DNER as a whole.

A major aim of the project is to explore how learning and teaching are affected by existing and emerging DNER services and to thereby evaluate the value of the DNER enhancement projects, processes and outcomes. Working closely with the DNER Programme Team, the project is also helping to clarify the nature, scope and development path of the JISC/ DNER Information Environment, ensuring that the community is able to extract the maximum value from its investment.

Assisted take-up and use of DNER learning and teaching resources

JISC has a high level of responsibility to ensure that its products enhance education. JISC services need to be proactive to ensure that what is produced by projects has an impact on education and will be used and useful into the future.

Organisations adopt information and communications technology because it offers them perceived net benefits offset against costs. It may be that the same rules of adoption apply to learners and teachers in higher and further education institutions. However, many tutors see online learning as a threat to established educational values, partly because in many institutions managers and intermediaries direct investment in new electronic resources and teachers are not getting involved deeply enough in the choices available.

Criticism has been levelled at the resources available to the learning and teaching community. A recent JISC-funded study (the JISC Usage Surveys: Trends in Electronic Information Services (JUSTEIS) study) reported some barriers to development of appropriate and adequate learning and teaching resources to be:

- the diversity of the community (FE/HE, range of qualifications taught)
- changes in institutions for widening access
- collection development policies (libraries versus departments)
- subject based differences.

The JISC/DNER need to address these barriers, to get teachers to see past the individual and institutional barriers to uptake. Teachers and learners also need to be encouraged to lose their concern about the technology, and instead to see the tools, integrated seamlessly into their teaching. At one level the JISC is improving access to and use of its resources through the programmes described above. The JISC is also working to improve the infrastructure that sits behind the delivery of services to universities and further education colleges.

In other recent developments to JISC services the Resource Discovery Network (offered online and free at point of use) has been enhancing what it can offer, seeking to embed the RDN into university home pages and also to offer value added services rather than just lists of links to quality resources. All of the RDN's c.30,000 resources are selected, catalogued and described by subject and information professionals drawn from over 60 UK education institutions and related organisations. A new "Behind the Headlines" service offers users background information on the latest news stories via pre-set searches of high-quality Internet resources.

The RDN also offers the Virtual Training Suite, funded through the Learning and Teaching Programme, which currently consists of 27 subject based online tutorials, directing users to the best sites in their subject or to further information on how to find quality assured information in their subject on the Internet. In the next few months another 11 tutorials will be written specifically aimed at courses taught in FE colleges.

A study on advancing the use of electronic learning and teaching materials through routes to assisted take up is to be carried out under funding from the current JISC Learning and Teaching Programme. The study team will being asked to explore innovative ways to ensure uptake of resources where appropriate. In addition the study will need to consider:

- Improving familiarity and confidence
- Offering best subject based tools
- Encouraging creative applications
- The responsibility for take up
- Publicising best practice.

The study should elicit innovative ways in which the JISC/DNER can develop its activity to account more for the needs of users.

Mechanisms to ensure coherent and consistent development

A number of management and co-ordination mechanisms are already in place or are being developed which will directly feed into and support development activity. These include the standards and guidelines document mentioned above, and the DNER team's involvement in national initiatives to meet the goal of ensuring that development is underpinned by interoperability.

The projects funded under the Learning and Teaching and Infrastructure Programmes have been clustered according to themes. This encourages efficient use of resources for collaborative training and events, sharing of metadata and dissemination of the project results to the relevant learning and teaching communities. A number of successful synthesis events have been organised by the DNER team, bringing together all projects in the programme, as well as project staff from other initiatives. These meetings are useful for disseminating operational information (on topics such as accessibility and interoperability) but also for exchanging ideas on development activities and future direction, and providing feedback to the JISC.

As has been emphasised, development is one of the key strands of activity for the JISC for the foreseeable future. Development activities are currently taking place within a number of related JISC-managed areas. It is clearly important for DNER development activity to be developed actively with cognate areas. Of particular relevance are Managed Learning Environment (MLE), authentication and authorisation, and content delivery architecture developments.

Future programmes

JISC/DNER is now moving forward with further development for the Information Environment. Many of the projects in the current Programmes are now starting to indicate where new development needs to take place. One new area, and its first main development programme, is described below.

Content Disclosure and Submission

The JISC would like the Information Environment to be a place where members of the HE and FE community can place and share useful content. The JISC content portfolio has the potential to grow to embrace both externally generated content from publishers and aggregators of educational content and community-generated resources. Therefore staff and students clearly need a place in which to lodge suitable content and products and to be able to exchange and add to it. This is an important part of developing relevant and useful collections of resources. The Information Environment needs to create the mechanisms and supporting services to allow this process to occur.

The key objectives for Content Disclosure and Submission are:

1. To increase access to and sharing of community created content through the following mechanisms:
   - DISCLOSURE: Through standards in the creation of metadata and then harvesting of metadata
   - DISCOVERY: Providing support for the exposure of records about community collections (library, archive, learning, teaching and research collections would be eligible)
   - DEPOSIT: Direct submission of relevant content to existing services/ collections (the JISC already supports access to some community archiving facilities (eg. AHDS, Data Archive) whose role will be considered further within this context).
   - EXCHANGE: Re-purposing of existing and forthcoming JISC/DNER content suitable for use as learning objects to allow them to be integrated with or plugged into VLEs
2. By 2005, to have significantly enhanced access to community collections through the use of these mechanisms
3. By 2005, to have funded and managed a number of community based programmes in

order to ascertain the organisational, technical, and business challenges involved in sustaining this area as a core strand of JISC activity.

Exchange for Learning Programme

There have been several important changes in the information and learning landscape over the time in which the Information Environment concept has developed. The emergence of the VLE as a significant factor in institutional environments is driving an interest in the production and use of learning materials. This has implications both for the composition of DNER collections, and for how they are made available.

JISC/DNER services need to be made available as 'content objects' which can be assembled and reused as learning objects, course objects, and so on. JISC is working with the ICONEX project on a study exploring these issues. The team will advise about tools and techniques which might usefully be supported, in association with a 'learning exchange'. Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) need to be able to interact with remote repositories of materials. At the moment, IMS specifications for VLEs focus on XML (extensible markup language) for learning objects limiting their ability to be portals. JISC is supporting the work of the IMS Working Group on Digital Repositories which is working in this area. At the same time, JISC is hosting the NLN learning materials repository and will work with VLE vendors and partners in BECTA (British Education and Communications Technology Agency) to make materials available in a variety of ways, supporting better access.

JISC/DNER plans to develop the exchange for learning (X4L) service in collaboration with other JISC Programmes, the NLN (National Learning Network) and elsewhere. The purpose of this service is to allow the open exchange of learning objects materials between individuals creating and using them for learning and teaching by developing supporting infrastructure and tools. This will complement the provision of the NLN learning materials repository and will be interoperable with it. Plans include working with the RDN and others to develop better ways of characterising resources in terms of level, audience and curriculum relevance. The RDN is working with the LTSN and RSCs (Regional Support Centres) for FE to ensure that the descriptions are compatible and sharable.

INSPIRAL (based at the University of Strathclyde) is a study investigating how institutions are addressing the convergence of information (digital libraries) and learning environment and support issues. Further development work creating links between digital libraries and virtual learning environments is expected to arise out of the recommendations from this study.

The second article will offer an authoritative list and descriptions of the projects underway.

SEDA / SRHE Educational Development Research Network

"Investigating the impact of professional development courses in teaching and learning in higher education"

Three years ago the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) collaborated to form a joint Educational Development Research Network together with the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE). Our latest meeting was held on Thursday 15 November 2001 and was hosted by the Department of Education and Professional Development (EPD) University College London. Over 30 participants enjoyed and valued a lively and thought-provoking discussion around an issue with which most of us are actively engaged.

Led by Dr Holly Smith (Lecturer in Academic Staff Development, EPD), the meeting considered how we can investigate the impact of professional development courses in teaching and learning in higher education. Holly introduced the meeting by presenting thoughts on three areas we need to consider when planning to evaluate a programme:

- defining what it is you want to evaluate
- deciding on your approach to the analysis of data
- selecting appropriate methods of collecting data.

The discussion was illustrated with reference to two examples of small scale qualitative projects designed to address this question from different perspectives. The first was a Liverpool John Moores University Teaching Fellowship project, the second a HESDA funded evaluation of professional development at LJMU, Lancaster, Sussex, Exeter and UCL Associate Teacher courses running this year.

The aim of the meeting was to facilitate discussion of various research methods and approaches which could be utilised to explore this area, and the implications that choices of methods have for the understandings that we seek and claims that we can make. Participants had the opportunity to explore these methodological issues in small groups during the network meeting.

After the meeting many of us stayed on to hear Professor Stephen Rowland's inaugural lecture as Professor of Higher Education at UCL entitled "Is the university a place of learning? Compliance and contestation in higher education".

If members would like to host a future meeting of the network please get in touch with me. We run it as a low cost event where the host provides a room and a small fee covers refreshments. Lasting for about two hours, the session should relate to research interests of staff and educational developers. We would also like to explore possible future collaboration and network opportunities, including publications.

Ranald Macdonald FSEDA
Convenor, SEDA / SRHE Educational Development Research Network

SEDA Special 12

March 2002
ISBN 1 902435 17 6

The Emotionally Intelligent Lecturer

A Mortiboys

Since the publication of Daniel Goleman's book 'Emotional intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ' in 1995, there has been a growing interest in the part emotional intelligence plays in education. Much of this interest has focused on the development of emotional intelligence in schoolchildren whilst little attention has been paid to its role and significance in higher education.

This book looks at the importance of emotional intelligence for staff working as lecturers in higher education - how they can develop it and how they can use it. Split into four parts it covers: the case for developing emotionally intelligent lecturers; ten reasons not to do anything about this; reviewing and developing your emotional intelligence and three questions for the would-be emotionally intelligent lecturer.

Price: £8.00 sterling per copy

To order your copy please contact the SEDA Office. Details of all SEDA's publications can be found on our web site at:

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

Assessing Portfolios - reflections and digressions

Professor Phil Race
Senior Academic Staff Development Officer, University of Leeds

The thoughts in this article were catalysed by a SRHE Assessment Network seminar led by David Baume and Mantz Yorke, in London, on 23 October 2000. They were reporting an analysis of assessor reliability of teaching portfolios developed by participants on an Open University Course. (I've put references to their work in 'Further reading'.) Discussion during and after their presentation spanned the reliability of assessment of portfolios, and the validity of the portfolio as an assessment artefact.

Context

The assessment referred to by the presenters is of a highly developed scheme, where seven learning outcomes are evidenced in candidates' portfolios, with six underpinning values also required to be evidenced. Some values are required to be evidenced in relation to several of the outcomes. Assessment data showed that the overall assessment reliability was consistent with practice reported from the US, and that (for example) overall assessment judgements were in accord for around 60% of instances, with greater agreement being achieved for those assessment criteria which were somewhat administrative in nature (for example the inclusion of a CV in the portfolio, or reasonable conformity to word-length specifications). However, assessment of evidence of, for example, reflection or demonstration of application of equal opportunities principles to teaching practices, was more problematic.

What are we assessing?

Many years ago, I suggested about assessment in general:

> 'if you can measure it, it probably isn't <u>it</u>'.

When it comes to the measurement of evidence of values underpinning professional practice, could this be extended to:

> 'if you can <u>agree</u> completely on the measurement of it, it <u>definitely</u> can't be <u>it</u>!'

In other words, evidencing values may be too elusive for reliability to be achieved at the same time as validity. Or, in competence language, it is easy enough to assess: 'did once (or even several times)', but less easy to gain any measure of 'does normally'. I suggest that decisions about the quality of professional practice should not be merely based on 'can do... ' but 'does normally'. I accept that 'can do... ' may be a prerequisite for 'does normally... ', but the possibility exists that practitioners can accumulate evidence for 'did do... ' when this might be quite at odds with their normal practice or its underpinning values. Essentially, portfolios measure 'did do... ', not 'will do... '.

Who should assess?

In my own programmes, portfolio evidence is assessed by at least three parties:

- the candidate;
- a peer assessor chosen by the candidate;
- the candidate's mentor, where such a person is available to the candidate;
- the 'official' assessor - ie. a member of the course team.

This assessment is augmented by that of an external assessor, particularly in borderline cases. In my experience, where all three (or four) of the assessments are in agreement, it is safe to assume that the assessment is reliable. That said, this usually occurs when all parties are in agreement that the assessment decision is 'pass', and when one or other of the parties disagrees it is more usually the case that one or more elements of the portfolio have been 'not yet passed' by one or more of the parties involved. In short, it is easy to achieve assessment reliability when the portfolio is 'excellent', but much less easy to determine what should be agreed upon as 'adequate'. But multiplicity of assessment is questionable, as David Baume reminded the participants at the seminar "increasing the number of assessors may just increase the number of unreliable assessments", and can result in a "staggering poverty of assessment data".

Whatever else, my own feeling is that self-assessment, against both intended outcomes and underpinning values, is one of the most significant ingredients of a continuing professional development portfolio, and that it is where the self-assessment is found to be more critical than the peer-assessment or assessor-assessment, that it is likely that the depth of the reflection included in the portfolio is greatest. However, if that were to be a broadcast message, strategic portfolio-builders might be inclined to engage deliberately in structured self-denigration, which would counteract the validity of self-assessment.

What is being assessed?

There are several layers to this. The normal response in higher education is 'the achievement of the stated intended learning outcomes'. If and when the intended outcomes are entirely appropriate to the continuing professional development context, this would be fine. However, the intended learning outcomes tend to be somewhat mechanical, and rarely really address the 'professional' dimension of continuing professional development. In short, we end up measuring against outcomes that are relatively easily achieved and evidenced, rather than outcomes which may be really important. This reflects the assessment conundrum where in student assessment (I allege) we measure very reliably that which is unimportant, and fail to measure reliably (or sometimes even fail to attempt to measure at all) that which is really important, because that would be too difficult, and may lead us into charges of assessor unreliability.

Another layer is that of 'the claim'. In many professional development contexts, candidates are required one way or another to 'articulate their claim' to be seen as demonstrating good practice. If assessment is by written claim, whether in the context of a portfolio or in a written direct claim, what we have available for assessment consist of the words of the claim, not necessarily the professional practice itself. What we are therefore most likely to end up measuring is the skill with which candidates can articulate their claims, let's coin a term for this: 'claimancy'. In many cases, 'claimancy' may indeed be representative of good professional practice, but the possibility remains of 'claimancy' being artificial.

Digressive thoughts!

What if we choose to use portfolio assessment because (select one or more of the following!):

- We just find it too hard to find any more conventional way of assessing?
- We haven't really decided exactly what we're trying to measure, and therefore opt to measure 'something big' in the hope that this will capture what we're after?
- We think that portfolios must be all-encompassing, and therefore a better way to assess complex combinations of achievements and practices?
- We can't face the implications of having to pinpoint gaps or shortfalls in professional practice, and it is easier to hide our judgements about these in our assessment of a complex array of artefactual evidence?

In short, are we using portfolio assessment to escape from our responsibility to assess something really related to professional practice, or because we just don't know how to go about trying to measure professional practice itself?

What about strategic learners? Academics, for example, tend to be successful learners, and intelligently-strategic learners tend to be successful. Therefore, is the portfolio artefact easy territory for strategic academics? Are we using portfolios to measure, yet again, 'strategicity', particularly at the level of the vocabulary of 'claimancy'?

Some lessons I've learned trying to assess portfolios

- Bigger claims are seen as likely to be more successful than smaller claims. Most portfolios tend to be far more extensive than would be necessary to cover the achievement of the intended learning outcomes they are supposed to be evidencing. And bigger claims are more likely to end up meeting a wide range of learning outcomes evidence specifications, and be regarded as successful. But bigger portfolios are often not the evidence of deeper thinking.
- It's not the common ground between equivalent portfolios that is the most interesting, but it is in the differences between portfolios that the depth of thinking tends to emerge; in other words, reliability of assessment can be at odds with validity.
- Assessment of portfolios needs (like many other instances of assessment) to be diversified. In other words, several different parties need to be involved in the assessment, and the artefact itself needs to contain several different forms of evidence (ranging from 'claim' to 'testimony', but with a variety of different corroborating evidence in between).
- Dimensions such as 'values' or 'principles' are better tested (or at least confirmed) by means other than written words. It is often possible to tell in a short viva whether a candidate actually believes in values or principles which have been eloquently addressed in a portfolio.

Concluding comment

From the study shown at the seminar (and a range of US research cited), in contexts such as that of teaching in higher education, 40% of assessors can not agree whether a portfolio demonstrates that a candidate is a competent professional. The portfolio alone as an assessment artefact will not solve this dilemma, nor will elaborate specification of the portfolio boundaries and assessment criteria. Perhaps we're using portfolios when we don't know what else to do, or when we're scared of trying harder to quantify and assess real professional practice?

Further reading

Here are references to the work by Mantz Yorke and David Baume I referred to on the assessment of portfolios, and to some other things they have written on portfolios and their assessment.

Baume, D (2001) *Assessing Portfolios*. York: Learning and Teaching Support Network Generic Centre

Baume, D (2002) *Helping people to prepare portfolios*. York: Learning and Teaching Support Network Generic Centre (in press)

Baume, D (2001) How to enrich a teaching portfolio. *Times Higher Education Supplement* 16 March 2001 p.23

Baume, D (2001) Portfolios for learning and assessment. York: Institute for Learning and Teaching

Baume, D and Yorke, M (2001) Portfolio Assessment? Yes, but ... in *Case Studies in Assessment*. Webb, G and Schwartz, P. London: Kogan Page

Baume, D and Yorke, M (2002) "The reliability of assessment by portfolio on a course to develop and accredit teachers in higher education." *Studies in Higher Education* 27(1): 7-25

Online Review: The Resource Discovery Network

Dr Stephen Bostock FSEDA
Academic Staff Developer
Department of Academic Affairs
Keele University

The Resource Discovery Network (RDN) is a web site providing links to quality assured subject materials for FE an HE. Why would we need it when search engines like Google improve all the time and virtual libraries like Yahoo have been around for years? The familiar problem with searching all of the web is getting large numbers of hits of doubtful relevance or quality. Refining one's searching skills can help the former but not the latter. Subject gateways overcome the quality problem by linking only to resources checked by a trusted cataloguer, and providing annotation information about the resource that informs the potential user. Most academics will know some favourite gateways in their subject. The RDN is providing a super-gateway to these gateways (now called hubs). There are five current hubs: BIOME (Health and Life Sciences), EEVL (Engineering, Mathematics and Computing), Humbul (Humanities), PSIgate (Physical Sciences) and SOSIG (Social Sciences, Business and Law). Through these hubs it claims access to 35 000 quality assured resources. Hubs for Arts, Education, Geography and Sport are in development.

Evaluating the usefulness of specific web resources was the subject of a previous online review. It is clearly a key skill for staff and students. However, until students have these skills they could be well advised to use RDN as a gateway to useful materials, rather like pointing them at the campus library, where all the books will have been ordered by staff.

Browsing through the subject hierarchy takes you to one of the five hubs and their structure. However, searching is possible across the hubs. How good is the searching? A search on, for example, 'French revolution' gave 10 hits from 2 hubs while the same search in Google gave 758 000 hits! However, the first Google page contained many of the RDN hits. Another search on RDN for 'neural networks' gave 91 hits, mostly university departments, journals and software. The same search in Google was noticeably faster and gave 484 000 hits. Searching on 'Bibliographies on Neural Networks', RDN had no hits while Google had over 6000, including some excellent, academic ones near the top. Clearly, for searching, RDN has some stiff competition but it would be a good starting point even if a later search on a generic search engine would probably throw up some additional materials.

A real bonus is the RDN Virtual Training Suite - 'a set of online tutorials designed to help students, lecturers and researchers improve their Internet information skills'. There are already good generic Internet tutorials available, notably Internet Detective. The RDN tutorial is less comprehensive but scores by providing tutorials customised to 40 disciplines, with links to subject resources. Amongst the documentation is support for teachers on how they might use the tutorials with their students.

The accessibility of web pages is addressed. The RDN has a Disability Statement and the pages do avoid the worst sins of web design, for example, all the graphics on the RDN home page have alternative text descriptions. There is an accessible text-only version available, except for the training suites.

The RDN is funded by JISC so it should not disappear overnight. It is not the only attempt at a generic gateway - NISS and BUBL are well established and useful, and the LTSN centres have resource links on their web sites - but for a single link to give to students the RDN is hard to beat.

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

www.seda.demon.co.uk/eddevs/vol3/rdn.html

Reviews

Books

Learning Journals: A Handbook for Academics, Students and Professional Development

Jennifer Moon
Kogan Page (1999)
£15.99
ISBN: 0 749430 45 1

I read this book because I wanted to introduce learning journals into one of my courses. It served this purpose well. It is relatively short (145 pages) and easy to read. It is generic, making reference to the use of learning journals in a range of disciplines - from Maths, Engineering or English Literature to professional education in nursing or teacher education where journals have been more commonly used. It also discusses the use of journals for personal development, and the author shares some details of her usage of journals over the years, from her locked schoolgirl diary to her attempts at keeping an 'Intensive Journal' as developed by the psychologist Progoff.

The book covers the kinds of questions any teacher thinking of introducing journals, or improving the use of journals, would need to think about. This includes: how and why they aid learning; the variety of purposes; the importance of being clear about what they are for; how to start writing; possible formats; how to assess journals. For readers who want to follow up some of the literature in this field, there are plenty of references to books, articles and some websites.

Although I found the book useful, there are aspects of it that some readers may find frustrating. The author does not go into as much detail as might be expected in a 'handbook', either in terms of background theory, or the actual practice of journal writing or assessment. For example, Moon locates the rationale for journal usage within the context of developing the practice of reflection ('a form of mental processing with a purpose and/or anticipated outcome that is applied to relatively complex or unstructured ideas for which there is not an obvious solution', p. 23) and metacognition ('the ability to monitor one's current state of learning', p. 27). But we are referred to her other book (Moon 1999), which incidentally also has a chapter on learning journals, for more detailed discussion of the theory and practice of reflection. She also refers to theories of the social construction of knowledge as being appropriate to introduce journal writing, but covers this in two sentences and gives us three references.

On the practical side, an appendix with some actual examples of the structure of several different types of journals, and some extracts of pages from journals, would have been very useful to give the reader ideas. Surprisingly, for a 'handbook' that is about a creative process, there are only two visual representations in the book. One is a useful map of reflective writing and the other is a drawing of Moon's format for her own home-made personal journal (which includes treasury tags, hand-cut and folded A5 paper and jointed A6 boards). Teachers in higher education might be interested in some more discussion of electronic learning journals (mentioned but not discussed) than Moon's quaint cardboard constructions. Apart from using a journal herself for personal and professional development, I was left wondering if she had ever used journals systematically with undergraduates in a higher education context (other than on their use on one day training courses, which she mentions). If she had, we might have been given some examples.

In summary, this book gives a useful overview of a range of uses, formats and questions to consider when introducing, writing and assessing journals and has extensive references to literature which can be followed up for more detail. For readers with no background in educational theory, and particularly the literature on reflective learning, the book may be too superficial to be useful on its own.

Sarah Banks
University of Durham

Reference

Moon, J (1999) *Reflection in Learning and Professional Development: Theory and Practice.* London: Kogan Page

Practical Techniques for Improving Learning (Second Edition)

Morry van Ments
Kogan Page (1999)
£19.99
ISBN: 0 749427 99 X

In this, the second edition of his book on the subject, Morry van Ments provides a good introduction to role-play. The book is designed primarily for teachers who might want to use role-play as a teaching technique with students, although it is general enough to be useful for school teachers, as well as in HE and for those considering role-play in other contexts such as training and development or youth work. The book looks at specific concepts and activities that need to be taken into account and form part of the process of setting up, running and debriefing a role-play exercise. It also indicates the connections between role-play and other experiential learning techniques, including group therapy and computer-based interactive activities. A section on computer-based interaction has been added to the second edition to update its scope in the light of developments in IT since the first edition.

There are lots of useful tables and highlighted tips, hints and warnings in this second edition that would enable a reader to refresh their knowledge subsequent to the initial reading.

The book is intended to encourage teachers and trainers to use role-play, as well as to explain what needs to be done for those already committed. The author stresses the importance of keeping it simple initially, and the importance of allowing plenty of time for debriefing (i.e. learning) after the role-play. One of the problems Morry van Ments acknowledges is the reluctance of many people (teachers and students) to engage in role-play. He mentions some of the things that may cause reluctance, but doesn't address the very real fear which a teacher or trainer may encounter in adult learners who have had previous bad experiences of poorly run role-plays.

The section on computer-assisted interaction lists the kind of activities possible using the current state of the technology, but isn't really integrated into previous chapters. This is probably a problem caused by adding a section on IT to the second edition. It begs the questions whether an understanding of IT is integral to an understanding of role-play, and whether using IT would be an easier entry route into role-play for some teachers.

On the whole this is a useful book both as an introductory read and as a reference book for the experienced to return to.

Pete Sayers
University of Bradford

Forthcoming SEDA Conferences and Events

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

SEDA / HEPT One Day Event
FE into HE - implementing your HE Development Strategy
24 May 2002
Regents College London

SEDA Summer School for Staff and Educational Developers
19 - 21 June 2002
Lancaster House Hotel

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

or see the SEDA website at:

www.seda.ac.uk

6th Annual SEDA Conference for Staff and Educational Developers

Developing the Developers

20 - 21 November 2001, The Manchester Conference Centre

SEDA's 6th annual conference for educational and staff developers opened with a warm welcome from Professor Michael Harloe, Vice Chancellor of the University of Salford. Professor Harloe referred to the location of staff and educational development services within HEIs. Whilst in the early days some had been located on the periphery and regarded as 'Cinderella services' they are now increasingly recognised and valued at the centre of institutors with staff undertaking leading and enabling roles to improve the student learning experience.

Professor Phil Race got the conference off to a stimulating and participative start with his opening plenary session 'Towards a Teaching Taxonomy'. With characteristic flair and expertise Phil ensured that the whole conference was actively discussing, analysing and categorising the complex processes of 'teaching'.

During the afternoon and following day the 130 participants were able to choose from a rich menu of over thirty workshops and seminars which focused on the seven conference themes: strategic policy and contexts; research and evaluation; diverse roles and responsibilities; preparing for / managing change; skills for staff and educational developers; models of staff and educational development, and the new professionals.

Rakesh Bhanot introduces Carole Baume

The workshops and seminars provided a wonderful opportunity for shared learning and reflection. The approaches varied considerably; in one session I was throwing paper plates into a plastic bin liner whilst learning a huge amount about effective dissemination (Professor Sally Brown) and in another I was engaged in serious and provocative discussions about research-led teaching with Dr Angela Brew.

The conference closed with a plenary session led by Carole Baume (left), then Director of the TQEF National Co-ordination Team. Carole shared with participants her own experiences and observations from the conference and pointed out that there are now more 'kinds' of staff and educational developers, with the newer developers working directly with lecturers and projects; and experienced developers working more strategically. Carole emphasised the value of the SEDA Fellowship Scheme in offering an important framework for development as well as accreditation for staff and educational developers.

The conference drinks reception hosted by the LTSN Generic Centre in the magnificent Palace Hotel contributed to the overall feeling of warmth and conviviality at the conference. Evaluations indicated that participants particularly valued the atmosphere of collaboration and friendliness, which infused the conference - an important factor in deepest November towards the end of another busy term.

Kristine Mason O'Connor
University of Gloucestershire

SEDA Series - two new titles

Academic and Educational Development: Research, Evaluation and Changing Practice in Higher Education

Edited by Ranald Macdonald and James Wisdom
Kogan Page (Feb 2002)
ISBN: 0 749435 33 X
£22.50 pbk

With today's emphasis on change, innovation and best practice in higher education, this new volume offers educators, policy-makers and trainers the necessary evaluations of the latest thinking in the field. The collection stresses changing practice both in specific subjects and the academic department, and within institutions and the wider environment. It looks at the research underpinning change and considers its impact on student learning, staff expertise and institutional policy.

Educational Development through Information and Communications Technology

Edited by Stephen Fallows and Rakesh Bhanot
Kogan Page (Feb 2002)
ISBN: 0 749435 65 8
£22.50 pbk

Now that Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has become a core student skill and is central to almost all teaching in higher and further education, this is a new collection designed to explain just how to harness and develop it to improve learning. It is written in non-technical language for working teachers across many disciplines, presenting the experience of contributors drawn from a wide range of higher education settings, both in the UK and internationally.

The books are available from booksellers and from Kogan Page direct (contact details left). Details of the other titles in the SEDA Series can be found on the Kogan Page website.

Proposals for future publications in the series should be sent to James Wisdom at:

jameswisdom@compuserve.com

News from the SEDA Accreditation Cluster

Professional Development Framework (PDF) Committee

The SEDA PDF committee are pleased to announce that the first two institutional programmes have been recognised under the new framework.

The first is under the Developing Professional Practice (DPP) named award and is a joint programme run by the University of Leicester and the Nottingham Trent University. And the second is under the Embedding Learning Technologies (ELT) named award and is run by the University of North London.

Further details on the schemes and the named awards which have been recognised can be obtained from the SEDA Office (office@seda.ac.uk) or from David Baume, SEDA's Accreditation Co-ordinator (baume@compuserve.com).

Fellowships Committee

The SEDA Fellowships Committee have a new External Examiner. Carole Baume FSEDA, Regional Director of the Open University in the North West, has taken the role over from Professor John Cowan.

SEDA Development Officer News ... or ... My Response to 'What *do* you actually do?'

The question above has been asked of me so often since I took up my post as SEDA's development officer, I thought it might be useful to share with you some of the initiatives I have been working on since January. Having said that I must point out that the question has not been asked by anyone within SEDA - you of course understand that there are so many opportunities and possible developments to take advantage of, but by my ex staff development colleagues in FE who still can't quite believe that jobs do exist which don't involve white board pens, differentiated learning outcomes and disciplinary hearings with bored teenagers.

I think it is fair to say that the key to my role is to introduce SEDA to a wider audience and to help the association become more responsive to its members needs. For some years SEDA's various committees have explored these issues in order to clarify SEDA's key activities and constituencies. I am now in a position to put some of these ideas into practice whilst retaining SEDA's special qualities.

My first task has been to analyse SEDA's current membership and clear gaps are apparent in educational organisations, HEIs and FE Colleges. Various initiatives are planned to reach out to people involved in staff and educational development in these areas such as:

- a one day event in May to support HE in FE - more details on page 26.
- a series of publications to support staff development in FE.

I am also exploring income-generating ideas such as funding opportunities for SEDA now that it has charitable status and I am reviewing SEDA's publicity literature.

I am very keen to hear your views on these ideas and on ways in which you think I can help SEDA develop over the next year. I would be happy to visit you at your organisation or please e-mail me at:

julie.hall@seda.ac.uk

SEDA Summer School for Educational Developers

Lancaster House Hotel, Lancaster
19th - 21st June 2002

Meeting the needs of new educational developers

Educational development has moved in recent years to centre stage within higher education. We have seen the creation of educational development units and the Learning and Teaching Support Network, extensive funding of projects seeking to improve the quality of student learning, new posts to co-ordinate teaching and learning developments in departments, and significant resources devoted to learning technology.

However, people often move into staff and educational development without receiving any specific professional education for their new role. At the same time, these new educational developers are likely to face a variety of challenges as they seek both to effect educational change and to develop their own careers. In order to help meet the needs of these new developers, SEDA now offers an annual three day Summer School. The course is aimed at those with less than three years experience and will support those who are working towards the SEDA Fellowship.

What is involved?

The course will be designed around workshop activities and participants will focus on their own work, concentrating on developing the skills and conceptual frameworks necessary to plan, run and evaluate educational development activities to meet the needs of higher education institutions.

Sessions will be practice based and facilitated by experienced educational developers and grounded in research on learning and teaching. Presenters include David Baume, Ali Cooper, Peter Kahn, Ray Land and Sue Thompson. The workshop element will involve example case studies, role play and collaborative problem solving supported by a range of materials. The course will include opportunity for small group work and tutorial time with an experienced developer to support action planning.

Building on last year's Summer School

The course will be based on the programme for the successful Summer School in 2001, as well as on the feedback provided by last year's participants. The programme for the Summer course will also be devised in the light of input from the Learning and Teaching Support Network. This will allow greater consideration of educational development within specific disciplines. All participants will be asked to complete a survey in advance to provide information about their experience and goals which will help in final planning.

Further details

The fee for the three day event is £475 per delegate (to include two nights accommodation, all meals and refreshments), although days 1 and 2 may stand alone (please contact SEDA for more information). For an outline programme and booking form for the Summer School please contact the SEDA office:

office@seda.ac.uk

Peter Kahn FSEDA
SEDA Fellowships Committee

Peter Kahn is the Teaching Development Officer at the University of Manchester, based within the Teaching and Learning Support Unit.

Selected sessions from the 2001 Summer School

- Models of educational development
- Our role as educational developers
- Participants' presentations
- Running and designing events
- Planning our own development
- Opportunity for mentoring
- The role of educational developers in managing change
- Building a professional development portfolio.

What participants on the first SEDA Summer School found useful ...

- Networking, sharing ideas with colleagues / participants
- The individual mentoring
- Exploring our problems as educational / staff developers
- Scholarship of teaching - theories of T&L
- Wide range of experience / roles to tap into.

SEDA Advisory Group Meeting - November 2001

The first meeting of the newly constituted SEDA Advisory Group took place at the end of 2001. Its role differs from the SEDA Steering Committee it replaces as it was felt that it is in fact the SEDA members who generate the steer and to whom the Association is answerable. In contrast this Advisory Group will offer us advice, sharpen and extend our vision across the sector both in the UK and globally. It will also be a 'critical friend' who challenges our assumptions, questions our strategies, and comments and advises us on the responses we devise. The external members felt that they too would benefit from participation in the group and the off the record discussions on issues of shared concern. We also asked them if they would on occasion lend us their own credibility, wisdom and experience by helping us communicate and advocate some of the directions and initiatives where they share a strong commitment. In short they will provide us with consultancy, liaison, advocacy and evaluation.

SEDA Members	External Members
David Baume FSEDA SEDA Accreditation Co-ordinator	**Cliff Allen** Learning and Teaching Support Network
Hazel Fullerton FSEDA Co-Chair of SEDA	**John Burgoyne** University of Lancaster
Julie Hall SEDA Development Officer	**Phil Candy** DETYA, Australia
Barry Jackson Co-Chair of SEDA	**Paul Clarke** Institute for Learning and Teaching
Mike Laycock Member of the SEDA Executive	**Liz Elvidge** University of Cambridge
Ranald Macdonald FSEDA SEDA Vice Co-Chair	**Nicky-Sinéad Gardner**
Su White SEDA Events Co-ordinator	**William Locke** Universities UK
James Wisdom SEDA Publications Co-ordinator	**Gill Tucker** Napier University
	Mantze Yorke Liverpool John Moores University

The terms of reference (which will be reviewed after one year) incorporate horizon scanning; providing external challenge; offering comment and advice and helping us front things.

On being asked by the external members to distinguish between the Advisory Group and SEDA Executive it was explained that the Executive will put forward issues they want to be discussed and share papers on which they would appreciate comment and in turn will discuss the advice and build it into their decision making. The externals offered to be proactive not just reactive, occasionally preparing a brief discussion paper when something new or of interest arises.

The membership does include members of the former Steering Committee. Gill Tucker, who had been the chair, agreed to carry the role for the first year to give us continuity. However, as she started her new job as DVC at Napier (congratulations, Gill) that week, she was unable to come to this first meeting. We are extremely grateful to Caroline Gipps, PVC Learning and Teaching at Kingston University, who rearranged her commitments at short notice to step into the breach. It proved particularly valuable to have her objectivity as someone with no previous involvement with SEDA but who shares our concerns.

The Group at present comprises an approximately equal number of internal and external members - see table below.

We are particularly pleased to have retained the perspicacity and wider awareness our two international members ie. Phil Candy - who joins the group by telephone conference from Australia and Nicky-Sinéad Gardner, currently based in Germany. This group already represents a good range of the related bodies in the sector and we are considering widening this further. As there are many demands on these people we will attempt to focus meetings on particular areas by inviting some to make a specific contribution in person and asking for comments from any who are unable to actually attend. We are also considering whether to formalise this into a smaller group who attend and an wider ring of those who will link up to particular topics on a more consultative basis.

The impact of other emerging groups with similar concerns was discussed and SEDA was encouraged to be assertive about this role contribution. The externals pointed out that SEDA has a history that is widely known, understood and which has credibility. Everyone knows about our experience in accreditation and the huge contribution that the appropriate, practical, up to date accessible SEDA publications have established in the sector. Although other providers have emerged it is felt that they have yet to prove themselves and show how they will meet the needs of the sector.

SEDA's non-aligned status, without the constraints of funders or externally imposed agendas, is rare and was referred to as a great strength that we should recognise and capitalise on in order to seize the opportunities that present; using to advantage our resulting independence and flexibility. The group offers a unique and legitimate forum for organisational representatives and individuals to get together thus stimulating collaborations and acting as a catalyst. The Advisory Group made a number of suggestions for Executive to consider as ways to try to achieve this.

The group was asked for ideas for a new external examiner for the Fellowship Scheme as John Cowan has completed his term in the role (thanks for a brilliant job on this, John). A number of names were put forward and Carole Baume has since been appointed. She is about to leave her job as Director of the TQEF National Co-ordination Team at the Centre for Higher Education Practice at the Open University (OU) to take over as Regional Director of the OU in Manchester (congratulations, Carole). This Fellowship role brings her full circle. As one of the founder members of the groups which devised and set up both the SEDA Teacher Accreditation Scheme and the SEDA Fellowship Scheme and as a SEDA Fellow herself, she brings to this verification position, a fresh perception extended by her subsequent experiences.

The meeting explored a number of SEDA's current activities. In particular the future shape of the Professional Development framework was discussed, in light of the increased focus on Continuing Professional Development by institutions in their recent Human Resource Strategy submissions to HEFCE. This is seen by the Advisory Group and by SEDA Exec as the major issue we are dealing with at present and there will be a report on the progress of this in the next issue of *Educational Developments*.

To increase communication with SEDA membership of the thinking and direction, the main points from future Advisory Group meetings will also be reported in *Educational Developments*.

Hazel Fullerton FSEDA
Co-Chair of SEDA

News ... News ... News

It was announced at the SEDA Executive Strategy Event, held in February 2002, that SEDA has gained Charitable Status.

SEDA's thanks go to Executive member Brian Smith for all his hard work in achieving this for the Association.

Update from Universities UK - Time For a Strategic Approach to Enhancement

William Locke
Policy Adviser, Universities UK

The revision of the quality assurance regime in all parts of the UK provides a timely opportunity to reconsider the various national initiatives and agencies aiming to support the enhancement of learning and teaching. Some educational developers may mourn the passing of universal Subject Review because it had offered a way to encourage previously reluctant academic departments and subjects to consider their methods and approaches. But the shift away from inspection towards greater institutional responsibility for quality assurance, with external audit providing the necessary public accountability, represents a maturing of quality assurance in the UK higher education sector. Yet we can expect continued Government interest in higher education, especially if we are successful in our arguments for more public funds.

Proposals for more extensive public information (HEFCE Circular 01/66) and for institutional audit (QAA Circular, imminent) are, however, only two dimensions of the new regime. The third, and crucial, dimension is enhancement, which was a key element of the work of the Higher Education Quality Council, but has not to date been a priority for the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). It can always be argued that it is ultimately institutions, departments and teachers themselves who need to be researching and improving their own practice. But without the sharing of good practices, expertise and materials, and the development of practice, it is more difficult for isolated individuals and subject teams to initiate and sustain change.

In fact we have a sophisticated, some might say over-complicated, set of agencies and initiatives to support innovation in learning and teaching. The Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN), the Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT), the Higher Education Staff Development Agency (HESDA), SEDA itself, the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF) in England and Northern Ireland and their equivalents in Scotland and Wales are probably the most important. Institutional learning and teaching strategies are also required in most parts of the UK, and other institutional strategies also support learning and teaching: for example, widening participation, human resources development, and employability, to name but three. But just how much impact has this all had? I want to focus on two related areas that have become priorities for the Government and, indeed, higher education institutions: widening access and retaining students.

Widening access and retaining students

A report by the late Maggie Woodrow and her team of researchers for Universities UK (*Social Class and Participation* - the follow up to 1998's *From Elitism to Inclusion*, to be published by Universities UK in March, 2002) suggests that, despite the variety and number of initiatives to widen participation during the last few years, very little has changed in the overall composition of the HE student cohort. HEFCE data (Performance Indicators 01/69) also show a wide variation in the levels of student retention, with some of those institutions most successful at widening participation suffering the highest drop out rates. I would suggest that this has come about because we have been trying to widen access without changing the basic model of HE that dates back to more elitist times.

Much of the existing HE system is founded on the assumption that the vast majority of students will have progressed from largely academic A levels to study for three-years on full-time undergraduate programmes (some of which may be interrupted by placements). Attempts to amend this model - eg. access courses for mature students, foundation years, extended four-year undergraduate programmes such as the MEng etc - have been just that: <u>amendments</u> that leave the basic assumption and structure intact. Even part-time programmes have generally been conceived as versions of existing full-time courses with, for example, similar regulations, credit structures and patterns of assessment. Two-year full-time sub-degrees have been more successful in breaking this mould, but the majority of students successfully completing HNDs, for example, still use this as a stepping stone to an honours degree, with the vast majority of these transferring to the second or even first years of a bachelors programme. This dominant model, and its underlying assumption, needs to be disassembled if we are to expand higher education in the UK, attract new kinds of student, retain them and sustain the relatively low non-completion rates we have come to expect. If we do not do this, we risk creating new problems in addition to the ones we are trying to solve.

For example, one immediate problem we create, if we do not dismantle the existing model, is how to support students without a traditional academic background through the initial stages of HE study. The model leads to the conclusion that these students are lacking the learning skills needed to complete an undergraduate programme and therefore require remedial help to survive. It engenders a view of non-traditional students as deficient, rather than of the traditional model of HE curricula as inappropriate for meeting the needs of learners from a much wider range of backgrounds. In order to overcome the perceived deficit, a series of supplementary support mechanisms are often introduced, which run parallel with the mainstream provision: study skills programmes, learning support centres, mentoring etc. These are well intentioned but, because of anxieties about spotlighting and stigmatising those with 'a learning deficit', they generally remain bolted-on, voluntary and low key. Some HE programmes, departments and even institutions, however, have revised their curricula and structures on the basis of a careful research-driven analysis of learners' needs and potential, and of the nature of the provision that can meet these needs and foster potential.

Rebuilding the model

Of course, this radical approach to curricula, assessment and student support is the proper business of educational developers, but we may have been more reticent in the past about engaging with the central academic business of our colleagues in subject departments than we should be now. I believe we need a collective and comprehensive approach to rebuilding a model (or, preferably, models) of HE study that takes a more strategic, dare I say politically informed, approach to developments. Some of the LTSN Subject Centres are building the capacity to do this, and the ILT is starting to establish local networks of members that could form the basis of more widespread change. Educational developers could play a significant role in the long-term cultural change that is needed to really break the mould.

I'd be grateful for any comments on this from readers - my contact details appear below.

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Widening Participation - The Application of Quality, Evaluation and Research

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Abstract

Currently, there is a plethora of widening participation projects within higher education institutions across the UK. Each one, although having similarities with others, is individual; relating to a particular aspect of widening participation or certain under-represented groups. A common aspect, however, will be new and innovatory teaching or ways of working that encourage non-traditional students into higher education. This also applies in a broader sense to lifelong learning and work-based learning.

It is appreciated that quality and evaluation are not necessarily both sides of the same coin, (evaluation may relate to many aspects of delivering a service, quality being one particular facet of this). However, evaluation can inform quality issues, and it is the intention to highlight some of the problems inherent in the evaluation of widening participation special funded projects.

Quality and evaluation

First of all it may help to focus issues of quality, in terms of widening participation, by asking oneself the question 'what factors or activities within a widening participation project would you wish to subject to rigorous evaluation or quality assessment?' This might include appropriateness of the teaching methods, progression of students, tracking mechanisms employed, pastoral and study support, and retention strategies to name but a few. But there are other factors involved (that will be considered below), but for which there are no easy answers. Nevertheless they should be given serious thought and highlighted more.

'Widening Participation for Muslim women' is a specially funded project run by The University of Birmingham and The University of Central England. The issue of quality of teaching, for example, is governed by the standard quality procedures of each institution. In addition, the tutors have not been especially recruited for this project, they are academics already in post, teaching full time campus-based students and developing their research portfolio. The modules delivered are long standing modules that were developed for full time degree programmes and are delivered every year on campus for year one undergraduate students, who of course also contribute to the evaluation process. This means that a significant amount of quality control is inherently in place.

The project, on a more practical level, also ensures that rooms at the various community venues are of a standard and have facilities commensurate with university teaching. It also helps to apply quality and effective evaluation to the project through assisting peer support, interviewing focus groups and obtaining feedback, liaising with the community providers, as well as ensuring that the implementation committee is advised accordingly. The implementation committee is an important feature of the project, helping to monitor and dispense advice and support, keeping it on the straight and narrow so to speak.

In terms of the wider perspective, however, this paper implores educationalists and organisations alike to consider three interwoven threads when applying aspects of evaluation and / or quality in widening participation and lifelong learning:

- innovation
- risk taking
- experimentation.

These broader, overarching issues should be considered and addressed in more depth. There are not necessarily easy answers to issues of evaluation and quality, with respect to innovation, that can be addressed by merely drawing upon internal or external quality procedures. Some other difficulties include:

(i) **The Nature of the Project**
This is often developmental and experimental. It can be difficult to tie success into traditional indicators used in wider university processes and teaching. There can be built in dangers; for example there is no point in raising the aspirations of a 14 year old to go to university if ultimately the doors are slammed in their face when they get there, with little recourse to other equitable education. Where is the quality in that? Even though, of course, the intrinsic value and quality of the original project may be exemplary.

(ii) **Timescale**
Widening participation needs to be viewed in terms of a long-term development strategy. Three-year projects will not necessarily have an immediate payback. For example efforts aimed at raising aspirations in 14 year olds will not pay dividends for at least 4-5 years. Even building stronger progression routes for post 16 might not have returns for at least 3 years. (In the 3 years of the Muslim women project lifetime, most can only afford time to study part time and might achieve a Cert. HE, HNC or HND at best).

(iii) **Quantitative and Qualitative**
Much work is focused on qualitative outcomes, eg. 'raising awareness'. This may be at the expense of actual participation rates and the short term quantitative results that the government is seeking in order to justify their rationale. The paradox is that qualitative evidence can emerge in large quantities from such projects, but ultimately the political masters want quantitative evidence because of the slavish preoccupation with tables, targets and benchmarks. These tensions should be recognised and discussed in an open debate.

(vi) **Progress on social inclusion is difficult to tie down to one indicator.**

(Smith, J p45 in Thomas et al. 2001)

Academic staff, and in particular senior management, need to consider very carefully how the three issues of innovation, risk taking and experimentation inexorably apply to widening participation projects and in many ways the pedagogy of teaching non-traditional students. When projects are evaluated and quality procedures imposed, how do these issues fit within the value of the project and at the same time compare to institutional policy? The key will be to build bridges between innovative practice and traditional institutional methods. How does an institution (particularly if it is one of the older or research-lead universities) come to terms with its conservative constitution but recognise and accept risk taking and innovation, let alone reward it? Especially as in many higher education institutions, the inertia and failure to accept or even to engage in the widening participation debate has been partly or wholly due to any number of factors, such as:

- Lack of intent
- Rank opposition
- Failure to innovate
- A slowness of response
- A lack of academic and administrative support systems.

To return to the issues of innovation and experimentation, how do you measure the quality of innovation? This is not an easy question to resolve, because almost by definition innovatory practice is new, how can you place traditional constraints on projects that involve partially or completely new practices? Innovation can, however, be measured in terms of its true innovative nature; was it innovative or to what extent was it borrowed from someone else, and what were the successful traits you borrowed?

It can also be measured over time. Chronologically one can, for example, measure how many Muslim women have accessed higher education via a project, or how many have gained a qualification that they wouldn't have in traditional circumstances or without the innovation having taking place. However, deciding what deems a project to be 'successful' is value-laden. Just how many students make it a success, and also what achievements need to be attained by the students in order for it to be called a success?

HEFCE appear 'benign' (as one advisor once noted) when it comes to a project meeting its aims entirely. HEFCE, in fairness, is applying certain latitude and does recognise that much of what goes on in these projects can be innovative or involve risk taking. After all everyone is to some extent treading new ground, on a steep learning curve and going into unknown territory to mix some metaphors! There appears to be a need for balance, however, between latitude and clear target indicators or evaluation procedures that enable a project to work to clear instructions. Otherwise there can be confusion for academics, project workers, institutions; in fact for all concerned.

Confusion caused by unclear outcomes and evaluation include, for example, the Project Manager (whom shall remain nameless) who indicated that he was not sure what he was going to say to HEFCE in his interim report, because the aims and outcomes of the project he had inherited were so nebulous! How could he measure success and therefore the quality and efficacy of his project? Another example was the interviewee who asked the panel would they be willing to provide academic and professional development in terms of widening participation activities? The reply apparently bordered on the bemused, with blank expressions and lack of a 'quality' answer; belying a lack of thought in terms of the quality of staff development in this area. Finally, another interviewee (different interviews so I understand) asked the question 'what are the intended outcomes of the project?' - the panel could not answer this with any clarity! Instead they suggested that the targets were still to be set! (Even though they had already received funding). These examples may be anecdotal, but they illustrate how much thought needs to be given to widening participation in a holistic sense with clear strategies and, in turn, evaluation procedures.

If we are to ensure quality in terms of the efficacy of widening participation projects then perhaps HEFCE need to take a more active role in ensuring that such projects are (by mutual agreement) achieving a certain set of standards. HEFCE could have easily done this in the bidding process and indications suggest this will certainly happen in future.

The innovative practice a widening participation project has developed may benefit from alternative forms of innovative practices from other projects. By the same token the innovation that project staff have applied to their own initiative might not work in a particular instance, but that does not mean to say that it is a failure. To quote Edison 'I didn't fail ten thousand times. I successfully eliminated, ten thousand times, materials and combinations which wouldn't work'. What this means in this instance is that innovation and risk taking must be allowed to develop in an atmosphere free of fear. The caveat is that the experimental nature of a project should not mean that the students themselves feel they are being experimented upon. This means that innovation needs to be pushing the higher education envelope just enough to allow it to retain the standards (or shape) required to give the students quality of teaching and learning. So, ultimately, the experimentation must be upon the institution; testing institutional procedures, attitudes and pedagogy for example.

Learning and teaching

Innovation in learning and teaching is important, indeed SEDA explicitly states as part of its aims that it exists for 'promoting innovation and good practice in higher education'. In this respect SEDA can bring extensive experience to bear in terms of appropriate and effective pedagogy for students arriving to higher education via non-traditional routes. More research could be done within this field and rolled out to the sector. The recent document *Strategies for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education* HEFCE June 01/07) and its companion guide *Widening Participation Strategies in Higher Education* (June 01/36) goes some way to doing this.

The former document provides some excellent examples regarded as good practice and some of the advice and lessons learned need to be incorporated into learning and teaching strategies. However, more references need to be made to widening participation strategies in institutional statements that relate to teaching and learning. Other documents unfortunately do not appear to heed this. For example HEFCE 01/45 (July 2001) *Quality Assurance in Higher Education* and HEFCE 00/56 (December 2000) *Rewarding and Developing Staff in Higher Education* pay little or no attention to widening participation.

HEFCE 01/37, however, explicitly states ...

> 'student retention is affected by learning and teaching methods, the learning and teaching strategy is central to comprehensive attempts to widen participation. When developing widening participation strategies, institutions need to think through what they need their learning and teaching strategy to deliver for them' (p5).

The document goes on to discuss monitoring and evaluation in similar ways stated above and also calls for research and scholarship in enhancing teaching (p9). It contains valuable case studies where institutions have considered learning and teaching strategies, innovation, assessment, quality and retention in a broader perspective that has widening participation at its heart.

At a recent conference on lifelong learning and widening participation, a HEFCE representative hinted that future widening participation strategies would concentrate on retention and progression. Retention, learning and teaching strategies, and the quality of student support will therefore have an important role to play. In this respect innovation again can help.

Some educationalists discuss working with non-traditional students in terms of the 'inclusive curriculum'. It concerns 'curriculum related activities which are aimed at pro-actively including non-traditional students.'

Examples include:

- Interactive teaching practices,
- Re-working of materials to ensure relevance to previously excluded groups,
- New assessment methods which are suitable for students with limited previous formal educational experience,
- An outcome based approach to learning focused on what the target group will have learned at the end rather than the content which academics may wish to put in.

(Moriarty A. Jisc-ISL discussion group, October 2001).

Aspects of learning and teaching that also relate to the quality agenda help provide a direct link to assist effective and good quality teaching which helps retain students from non-traditional backgrounds. What we might even want to do as well, is assess its appropriateness as an integral part of higher education teaching for *all* students. These types of developments may be labour intensive and come at a cost. Is this cost something the government will bear? Only time will tell, but for the higher education sector already strapped for cash, it is understandable that their commitment remains with less intensive forms of teaching that is familiar. Not new or innovative practices that may require more work!

This paper argues that government and funding bodies need to reward and highlight innovation and risk-taking much more if it aims to address issues of social exclusion. This needs to be reinforced by quality research and quality assurance. Examples of good practice can then be disseminated outward from a particular project at micro level and assist the wider issues of equity and inclusion at the macro level. The two HEFCE documents quoted are a start and will hopefully act as a catalyst.

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A Developmental Framework for Evaluating Institutional Change

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Introduction

In this article we present our developmental framework for an institutional evaluation of a major change, namely the introduction of a VLE (virtual learning environment) across Coventry University. This framework serves the dual purpose of capturing the complexity of such an implementation and of assisting in its development. It represents a combination of insights we have gleaned from Stake's (1967) 'Countenance Model of Evaluation' and from Rothman and Friedman's (1999) concept of 'Action-Evaluation'. We present an outline of some of the things we have taken from each of these two evaluation approaches to fit with our local context. We conclude with suggested guidelines based on these in the hope that other educational developers can benefit from our recent experience.

Defining the what, why and how of our evaluation

What
We are evaluating the implementation of a single VLE across a university from an institutional perspective.

Why
The purpose of the evaluation is threefold: firstly, to inform and advise the rolling implementation itself; secondly, to inform and advise changes in University processes and procedures; thirdly, to inform the wider academic community.

How
Many evaluations are undertaken by an external researcher at the final phase of a project, often with fund-holders as the key audience in mind. Such evaluations have limited value because, as summative documents, they primarily make judgements about the value of a project once it has finished. More productive in our case, however, would be an evaluation that is participatory and developmental; one that can inform the drive for improvement beyond the bounds of the project itself. Moreover, because the intervention affects the whole institution its success depends on the change process being inclusive. The spectrum of stakeholders is large: students, tutors, managers, technical and administrative units, external adopters and educational developers. We have therefore formulated an evaluation framework capable of handling the high degree of complexity involved in enabling institutional change; reflexive enough to respond to developments over time (attitude shifts, growth in expertise, student access, upgrades to software etc) and inclusive in the light of contributions and feedback from stakeholders.

The framework: the countenance model

The framework we have adopted comes partly from Robert Stake's (1967) countenance model of evaluation but the spirit with which we apply the research is more akin to Friedman and Rothman's (1999) descriptions of action evaluation.

A strength of Stake's countenance model is in its accommodation and structuring of different levels of data. In our evaluation we have gathered data of variable status: some lecturers and students offer their own evaluations of online learning in modules with which they have been involved; computing services give us statistical records of user-patterns; some data comes from online surveys; some data is generated within robust research frameworks while other data is more informal and anecdotal. In sum, we have a mix of qualitative and quantitative, formal and informal, primary and secondary data. Within Stake's model, all of this data can be managed in sets according to the categories it serves within a matrix. Stake's matrix allows an analysis of this data in relational terms as shown in Figure 1 and described below.

The matrix offers six boxes for the processing of descriptive data and it dictates the relationships that can be expected between them. Stake defines three levels in the process, namely Antecedents (conditions existing prior to the intervention), Transactions (encounters and negotiations of the intervention itself) and Outcomes (outcomes arising during the intervention). Whatever data we have concerning institutional readiness for a University-wide VLE, for an example, is therefore encapsulated within the antecedent phase.

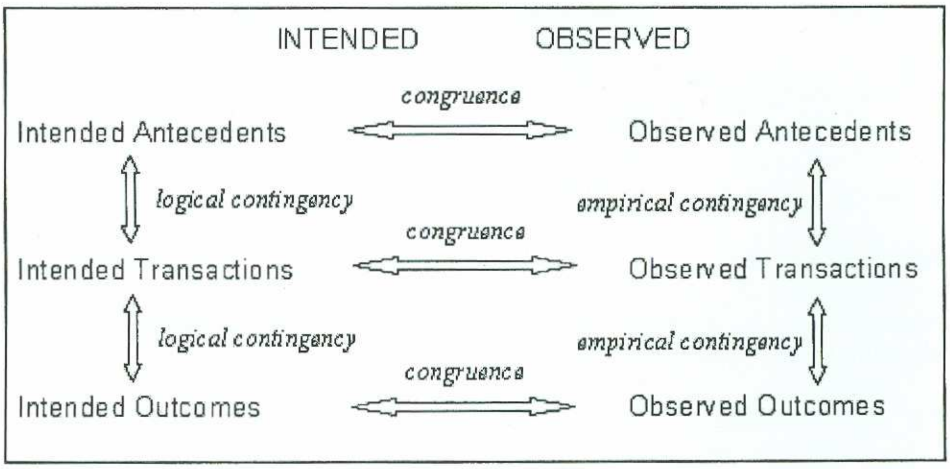
Within each phase there arises a degree of congruence between what was intended during that stage and what is observed. As shown in the matrix, each of these levels is contingent on the previous one and an internal logic between intentions at each of the levels is sought. Similarly, some observed antecedents will impinge on observed transactions and both may effect observed outcomes

At this stage of the evaluation research, we are not concerned with the disparate nature of our data because a) we want to encourage all stakeholders to present their views, impressions, analysis and experience; and b) whatever judgements we make on the basis of this will be presented back to key stakeholders for their views and for a refined analysis. This iterative phase has close affinities with action-evaluation.

Action-evaluation

While we found Stake's matrix an invaluable aid for the collection and management of our data, the overall model is formulated for an external evaluator. Although there are procedural similarities between Stake's and Friedman and Rothman's model of action-evaluation, the latter gives greater emphasis on continual stakeholder participation for the developmental process. We share this emphasis in that we explore goals and issues with colleagues who are experimenting with online learning (often with

Figure 1: Stake's matrix for processing descriptive data



internal funding to do so) and feed their views back into the evaluation process. Briefly, action-evaluation which is a close sibling of action research, is structured around three key phases, namely:

The baseline phase: in this phase the focus is on clarifying definitions of success. In our case this meant presenting our own analysis of intentions and their congruence with what is observed according to Stake's definition of these. The next stage of this phase would involve clarifying future strategies and goals for the future. A further feature of this phase in action-evaluation consists in the online presentation of findings for discussion and again, this is something that we have made use of from year 0 of our evaluation. See for instance our discussion of virtual focus group research we established to assist in the choosing of a VLE for Coventry University (Deepwell and Cousin, 1998).

The formative phase: in this phase the online data and analysis forms the basis for a face to face meeting to "ensure that key project leaders, participants and others are 'on the same' page about their goals as they move ahead" Rothman and Friedman, 1999, p.4)

This face to face meeting is following by the development of a customised web-based discussion forum in order that stakeholders can monitor and revise their goals and action plans as they seek to implement them. In the case of Coventry, we have moved beyond the facility of an intranet for the purposes of data management and discussion in that we have a public evaluation website linked to CHED's homepage at www.coventry.ac.uk/ched.

The summative phase: this is the final stage in which "participants take stock of their progress using their evolved goals to establish criteria for retrospective assessment (p.5). We at Coventry are approaching this phase, since we are now in year 4 of a 5 year implementation cycle.

We now describe how we have applied our framework based on the two approaches above mentioned. Above is a snapshot from our evaluation website, which shows how broad issues arising from the data are classified into the respective boxes of the matrix - drawn from Stake's - for the transaction phase of the Coventry implementation.

The judgements made under 'observed transactions' are in the light of data emerging from a number of sources. The above structure allows us to interrogate this data for degrees of correspondence and degrees of variance between the two aspects (intended and observed) as well as a progression from the previous phase (antecedent) towards the subsequent phase (outcome). A discussion of one of these issues, namely provision for training and support, should serve to show how the countenance evaluator can provide a narrative around this data and how some of the principles of action-evaluation come into play.

Intended transactions	Observed transactions
institutional change	institutional change
10+% active use	20+% uptake
full and equitable access	partial access, unreliability of systems (registrations)
ease of adoption	ease of adoption
provision of adequate training and support	variable support
motivation	individual effort, time investment and perseverance
any-time any-place learning	any-time any-place module resources
student-centred approach	new communication channels

Table 1: A snapshot from Coventry University's evaluation website

Provision of training and support

- Intended: the provision of adequate training and support, both technical and pedagogical

Local support was deemed an essential part of the rolling out of the VLE. To this end, there was a 10-week familiarisation programme for a group of technical support staff who assessed themselves against a competence list of tasks associated with supporting the VLE, including skills in general software used by colleagues. In each School there were also academic colleagues charged as local educational developers to support the adoption process. Additionally, a team of three people in the Centre for Higher Education Development took on the role of a central support team for WebCT. The computing services general helpdesk supported student users. In a couple of instances, extra, short-term appointments were made to produce teaching materials in a format suitable for the VLE.

- Observed: variable support

Data and feedback concerning the effectiveness of the VLE support showed that the technical experts were rarely able to perform in this role because they had not been given remission from other tasks. In most cases, they did not promote their support role and soon lost the knowledge they had acquired during the training programme through disuse. The temporary appointments were effective for the jobs they were appointed to do, although there appeared to be little evidence that they have encouraged adoption beyond the close circle of colleagues who were able to draw on their services. Local academic support on the other hand has developed more successfully, both through the Taskforce members and independently of them (eg. buddy systems). The team in CHED has continued to provide central support through online information, training sessions and a busy telephone and email hotline.

- Action resulting from formative evaluation

The main thrust of the support provided both centrally and locally continues to encourage and empower colleagues to work directly with the VLE to enhance their teaching and learning. Localised and often informal academic support is recognised as a key to VLE support and training. The few short-term appointments which were made to "pump prime" the implementation have now come to an end. The nature of academic development in the institution is also responding in the light of this and becoming more of a consultancy, with responses tailored to individual teaching and learning requirements.

Conclusion and guidelines

We hope we have offered enough explanation and example to support an introduction to our framework and to some of the strengths of two complementary approaches to evaluation. Further examples can be found on our website. We conclude by suggesting a set of guidelines based on our evaluation research for colleagues interested in adapting our framework to their own context.

- Offer a draft evaluation strategy for comment and refinement with stakeholders
- Set up a shared resource base, eg. Intranet or web site - allow range of stakeholders/ evaluators to contribute
- Encourage devolved ownership of the evaluation
- Invite feedback and discussion (online and face to face) regularly
- Include differing perspectives and voices
- Propose dates for the different phases of the evaluation and convene feedback and discussion meetings
- State the expected results of each phase of the intervention and the data needed to support them
- Provide all stakeholders with access to the ongoing evaluation research
- Allow for a mix of quantitative and qualitative data

- Develop a structure for the collection, management and analysis of data
- Look beyond goal fulfilment for unexpected outcomes and their implications.

References

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Dialogues

... in which an Experienced (if not always expert) staff and educational developer converses with a *New, and probably younger, colleague.*

Independence

You said in your workshop on 'developing independent learning' that one of the jobs of a teacher is help their students to become independent of the teacher.

Indeed I did.

Do you really believe that?

I really really believe it. If our students leave us as they often reach us, skilled at learning mainly through being taught, then how do they continue to learn - as they will surely need to do - after they leave us?

By going on more courses.

And?

OK, I know the 'right answer'. By learning independently; by setting their own learning goals; by planning their own learning activities; by monitoring their own progress, and then reviewing whether they have learned what they wanted to learn and what else they need to learn. Oh, and with an outer loop to check on whether the learning methods they adopted in fact turned out to be best possible learning methods for them, and how they might use or change their learning methods on future independent learning ventures.

Did it really come out as smooth as that in the workshop?

No, it took you three hours.

?

Don't worry, they all did a lot of good work in the three hours, and their action plans that I saw looked very convincing.

Thank you. Why did you want to talk about developing independent learning?

What about lecturers becoming independent learners?

Hm. I hadn't thought about that. Well, most of them are, aren't they? They read journals, write papers, talk to each other – they study independently. They may go on the occasional course. They certainly go to conferences, which are a bit like courses, in some respects. But, yes, mostly lecturers continue to learn about their subject through some form or another of independent learning.

What about lecturers learning about teaching and learning? Do you think they should be independent learners about teaching and learning?

Of course. For the same reasons that students should.

Do you think they are?

Can I explore that for a bit?

Of course.

Let's start at the beginning of a lecturer's career. Lecturers come into lecturing from a wide range of backgrounds, including through a conventional first degree-PhD route and also from professional practice of some kind. Neither of those routes will probably have exposed them to much of the literature and theory about learning and teaching.

They'll have a lot of experience of learning. Doesn't that count?

Kind of. They'll have had a lot of experience of learning through being taught. They may have undertaken a more-or-less independent project or dissertation as an undergraduate, or for a professional qualification. They will certainly have undertaken substantial independent work for a PhD.

So they're already capable independent learners. Why, then, do we insist on them going through a course to learn how to teach? Why don't we just set them up with an independent learning programme about teaching, and leave them to it? And make ourselves redundant?

I now discover that, if there's one thing worse than having your pearls of wisdom ignored, it's having them taken too seriously!

I'm taking you appropriately seriously.

I know you are, and I shall respond accordingly. I believe that it should be one of the goals of any teacher...

Including us developers, you've said before that staff and educational developers are a particular kind of teacher...

Indeed we are. Among other things. It should be a goal of any teacher, including developers, to help students get to the stage where they can learn without dependence on a teacher.

And yet new lecturers, who you acknowledge are mostly already capable independent learners – you insist on putting them through course on teaching.

The University insists.

Who suggested that policy?

The Educational Development Unit, among others.

Fair enough, we did.

Let me try this. It hadn't occurred to be before. Most lecturers are good at further learning and independent study in their discipline. But teaching and learning, even the teaching and learning of your own discipline, are a different subject, often a very different subject.

How so?

Subjects have their own ways of thinking and arguing, kinds of evidence and data, standards of proof, meanings of words like 'argument' or 'theory' or 'model' or 'proof'. These may be very different indeed in a lecturer's primary subject, the one they research and teach, and in the kind of things we teach them on the course about teaching and learning.

And so...

And so, I suggest, with no shred of evidence currently at my disposal, that learning independently is probably a somewhat circumscribed ability.

A non-transferable skill?

A skill which does not readily transfer between different disciplines and professional areas.

And so it's OK, indeed necessary, to teach lecturers how to teach, even though they are already capable independent learners in their subject.

To help them learn how to teach. Y - e - s.

You look uncomfortable.

I am.

How can you reduce your discomfort?

The course for new lecturers leads into a continuing professional development process, largely an independent one, albeit with some support and input. But I'm not sure the course prepares them to undertake their continuing professional development. We need to change it so that it does.

How?

In the course, pay explicit attention to the continuing professional development skills and methods and success criteria...

... in fact, do all the things you told them in the workshop about helping students becoming capable independent learners, only adapted to their own CPD.

Fair enough. What else can we do?

I think we can talk more about learning in the course than we do.

There's a lot about student learning.

Yes, but do we encourage the lecturers to apply this to themselves, to their own learning about their teaching?

Not enough.

And to use the literature about how lecturers develop as teachers[1]?

Again, not enough.

And to talk about the differences between the language, the concepts and models and ways of thinking, as between their own discipline the discipline of teaching and learning?

Hm. On the course we talk <u>in</u> the language of teaching and learning...

But not much <u>about</u> the language, concepts and models?

Probably not enough.

Lots for us to do, then. Who will teach us how to do all this?

I assume that was a rhetorical question!

We'll learn independently how to do it?

Independently, and also interdependently.

I prefer the sound of 'interdependently'.

David Baume FSEDA
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The characters and the University in this Dialogue are fictitious.

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[1] For example Nyquist, JD & Wulff, DH (1996). *Working Effectively with Graduate Assistants*. Newbury Park, Sage. *and* Kugel, P.(1993). "How professors develop as teachers." *Studies in Higher Education* 18(3): 313-328.

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Brown, S and Race, P (1997) **Staff Development in Action**. Birmingham: SEDA.

Saunders, D and Hamilton, D (1999) A Twinning Model for Staff Development in Higher Education, *Innovations in Education and Training International*, **36.2**, 118-127.

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