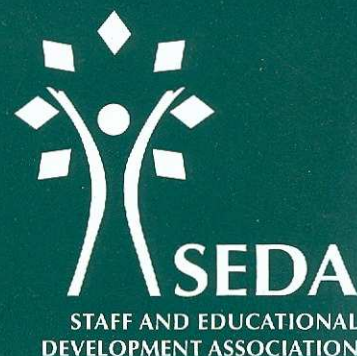


EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

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The SEDA Fellowship and Associate Fellowship: Professional Accreditation for Staff and Educational Developers

Dr Helen King, AFSEDA

What are the SEDA Fellowship and Associate Fellowship Schemes?

The SEDA Fellowship and Associate Fellowship schemes are the only awards available in the UK that recognise the achievements of staff and educational developers with respect to their work in supporting change in learning and teaching within the post-compulsory education sector.

The SEDA Fellowship is designed for those with experience in academic staff and educational development. The Associate Fellowship is designed for those relatively new to the field, and for those for whom staff and educational development plays a part within their wider academic role (e.g. learning and teaching project staff, technology officers, teaching fellows). Assessment is on the basis of a reflective portfolio and, in order to remain in good standing, all holders are required to produce an annual CPD report.

The schemes are, therefore, for anyone who helps institutions, departments, courses, individual lecturers or support staff to develop and enhance their learning and teaching practice. The object of this enhanced practice is to improve student learning and the quality of the student learning experiences, and to help institutions to achieve their educational goals. SEDA very much welcomes registrants for the Fellowship or Associate Fellowship from the post-compulsory education sectors (further and higher education) both in the UK and beyond. Overseas holders to date come from a variety of countries including Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore and the Republic of Ireland.

What is a staff and educational developer?

The roles of staff and educational developers in different institutions and different countries are very wide-ranging, and the attempt to develop a specific definition is the cause of much debate (Macdonald, 2003). However, as a starting point, the following two quotes may provide an idea of the type of roles these schemes relate to:

"...an academic developer is any person who has a role in which they are explicitly expected to work with academics to assist them to reflect upon their

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2004

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academic role in relation to teaching, research, scholarship, leadership, funding applications and supervision of students. An academic developer may also work at a department / institutional level in a development role." (Fraser, 2001)

"The range of activities within academic staff and educational development might include:

- 1 Improvement of teaching and assessment practices, curriculum design, and learning support - including the place of information technology in learning and teaching.
- 2 Professional development of academic staff, or staff development.
- 3 Organizational and policy development within the context of [further and] higher education.
- 4 Learning development of students - supporting and improving effective student learning.
- 5 Informed debate about learning, teaching, assessment, curriculum design, and the goals of [further and] higher education.
- 6 Promotion of the scholarship of teaching and learning and research into [further and] higher education goals and practices." (Gosling, 2001)

Details of the Fellowship and Associate Fellowship Schemes

The schemes were originally launched nationally in 1994. By October 2003, 37 Fellowships and 2 Associate Fellowships had been awarded and 29 more candidates were preparing for accreditation. Over the last 9 years the roles of academic staff and educational developers have evolved considerably and, in addition, many more new learning and teaching support providers have appeared including technology officers, project staff and LTSN staff. It was considered timely, therefore, for the schemes to be reviewed and updated and, following over a year of brainstorming, consultation and discussion, the new versions were launched at SEDA's 8th Annual Conference in Birmingham in November 2003.

The updated versions of the SEDA Fellowship and Associate Fellowship schemes are briefly outlined below and described in more detail in the new leaflet and handbook (available on the web-site and from the SEDA office). The older version of the schemes included 11 objectives (9 for the Associate Fellowship) as well as the SEDA values. The new versions of the schemes are entirely equivalent, with the objectives and values being subsumed into five Outcomes (four for the Associate Fellowship). All new registrants will now work on the new version. Those existing registrants who are working on the old version of the scheme may continue to follow the original 11 Objectives and the Values if they wish.

Assessment is on the basis of a reflective portfolio and interview where candidates illustrate and discuss how their work embodies the SEDA values, demonstrates good practice, and shows expertise in one or more specialist topics within academic staff and educational development. Evidence and a reflective commentary (including reference to the relevant literature) are required within the portfolio to demonstrate the following five outcomes (four for Associate):

- 1 **Adopt an appropriate approach to the planning, design / delivery and evaluation of a range of staff and educational development activities.** Whether working with individuals, groups or institutions you need to demonstrate that you have:
 - a considered their needs and contexts,
 - b designed (and delivered where appropriate) an activity (or activities) to support these needs using appropriate developmental approaches,

- c provided constructive feedback to those you have worked with, and
- d evaluated your work in this area (using a range of self, peer and 'client' monitoring and evaluation strategies and techniques).

2 Demonstrate expertise in three specialist topics (one for Associate).

3 Have a critical and scholarly approach to your own professional practice and development.

4 Demonstrate a commitment to the underpinning SEDA Values.

- a An understanding of how people learn
- b Scholarship, professionalism and ethical practice
- c Working in and developing learning communities
- d Working effectively with diversity and promoting inclusivity
- e Continued reflection on professional practice
- f The development of people and processes

5. Have actively promoted staff and educational development (full Fellowship only).

As Dr Liz Beaty FSEDA stated in her foreword to the scheme's new handbook: "The Fellowship is not merely an assertion of professional competence. To undertake it is to 'practice what we preach'. Reflective practice is at the heart of the values of staff and educational development. The building of a Fellowship portfolio also requires us to articulate our expertise and our ability to communicate this through advocacy. Development requires a scholarly approach. It is more than sharing good ideas, it requires a critical interrogation of needs, an understanding of contexts and an evaluation of the consequences of our actions. Development is also a commitment to action. The Fellowship requires us to provide evidence of effective practice. Finally it asks us to interrogate our own development needs, signalling the commitment to continuing personal and professional development."

Benefits

The Fellowship and Associate Fellowship schemes are not just awards for past achievements, they also offer a process for reflecting on your current practice, developing specialist areas of expertise, and planning for your professional development needs. After achieving the award you will be entitled to use the letters FSEDA or AFSEDA after your name, and from the first day you register for the Scheme you will be able to benefit from the SEDA Fellowship community through:

- A personal mentor;
- Support Days, the SEDA Summer School and other SEDA events & activities;
- Jiscmail discussion list;

- Newsletters;
- Personal copies of the International Journal for Academic Development (for holders);
- Publishing opportunities;
- Opportunities to support the Fellowships Committee which informs the work of the community;
- Networking with registrants and Fellowship holders from a range of HE organisations and institutions both nationally and internationally;
- You can use your portfolio (at interviews and appraisal sessions) to demonstrate to your managers the range and depth of your role.
- Pulling together what you do (as you assemble your portfolio) and reflecting on it will lead to new insights.
- Feedback from other staff and educational developers will give you a sense of how your work relates to the work of others. It may also suggest new directions and possibilities.
- Events and peer-support for your continuing professional development (CPD) recording and planning.

For more information on the Fellowship or Associate Fellowship scheme contact the SEDA office:

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Information for Contributors

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

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

For more information please contact the SEDA office on: 0121 415 6801 or via email: office@seda.ac.uk

Embedding Learning Technologies: Lessons for academic developers

Helen Beetham

It is now over a year since the TLTP3 EFFECTS project metamorphosed into the Embedding Learning Technologies (ELT) programme within the new SEDA Professional Development Framework (PDF). An important legacy of the funded project is a new web site at www.elt.ac.uk, offering guidelines, case studies and example materials to support the developers of new ELT programmes.

At the end of the EFFECTS project, a final evaluation forum was held to discuss the lessons we had learned. The following represents a summary of key issues for academic and staff developers (full version available on the web site). The focus is on developing structured programmes to support staff in embedding learning technologies - especially under the ELT award framework - but many of these lessons are relevant to less formal kinds of development.

Programme philosophy and design

CPD for learning technologies is effective when it is organised around an action research/action learning model, in which participants set their own learning objectives, plan their own curriculum development project, and undertake evaluation and/or critical reflection on their work. This approach is likely to be of most interest to learning technology specialists, and learning and teaching enthusiasts and innovators.

An alternative model is to embed learning technologies into ILT and other initial professional development courses for academic staff. The advantage is that the use of learning technologies is seen as an aspect of mainstream teaching practice rather than an arcane

specialism. However, there may not be time within the context of such courses for staff to develop all the relevant skills.

The two approaches - an integrated learning technologies strand to teacher accreditation, and a specialist embedding learning technologies module - can be combined. For example, all staff may be asked to review and select appropriate technologies for a learning situation (outcomes 1 to 3/4), but only those choosing to specialise in learning technologies might carry through a full implementation, evaluation and report (outcomes 4/5 to 7). Common to both approaches is the focus on reflective practice. ELT is not a training programme in using specific technical tools or systems, though participants may be pointed towards such training if relevant.

The EFFECTS (now SEDA ELT) professional values were developed to ensure that programmes are underpinned by a concern for student learning. They are also intended to promote collegiality, enhance scholarship and critical reflection, and provide recognition for learning and teaching innovation. We have learned, however, that these are ideals towards which programmes can only advance as fast as the institutional context will allow (see the section on 'Institutional embedding').

While roll-on-roll-off programmes provide flexibility to participants, there are benefits to more intensive periods of development and to learning in a cohort. Structured sessions are also less demanding on tutor (developer) time. Therefore most EFFECTS/ELT institutions have opted for a series of workshops - often during vacation periods when staff have fewer immediate demands - followed up with one-to-one support during

implementation, evaluation and writing up.

Workshops on specific learning technology issues can usefully be opened up to all staff, with ELT participants playing a central role. By presenting their own work in progress or facilitating discussion, they can begin to act as champions and mentors to other staff.

Workshops that support the ELT action learning process and help build evidence for the learning outcomes can be confined to programme participants, to ensure a supportive and familiar environment.

Supporting participants

ELT programmes are designed to be progressive, enabling all participants to advance their learning technology awareness and development. For different individuals this might mean developing familiarity with particular technologies, becoming more effective at supporting student learning, becoming a critical practitioner and change agent, or undertaking educational research. Different individuals will require different kinds and degrees of support.

There is therefore a range of models for supporting ELT participants, from guidelines and toolkits to individual supervision and learning contracts. Structured tasks can be useful to help participants build portfolios, particularly where they lack the interest or experience to write an academic case study. However, participants should be encouraged to reflect on their own use of learning technologies, and in time to reflect on the wider practices of their department, institution or subject area. This secondary level of reflection will involve reading, asking questions and critically reviewing other people's practice.

It is important that the methods of delivery in ELT programmes support participants' familiarity-in-use with the technologies that they will be embedding. Most programmes use a web site or virtual learning environment and provide online communication opportunities to participants. Many participants will prefer face-to-face communication, however, and this is often the only way of supporting hands-on experience with new technologies. Optional (non-assessed, non-critical) online support will rarely be used by participants with other demands on their time. In other words, ELT programme leaders need to make the same critical decisions about appropriate use of technologies that

they are encouraging their participants to make.

Specialist learning technology programmes demand a range of support, including:

- Technical support - often provided by staff not directly involved with the programme
- Pedagogical support - advice on pedagogically sound uses of the available technologies
- Process support - scaffolding of the skills and activities required to meet the learning outcomes
- Personal support - to help participants deal with non-technical difficulties arising from their development projects.

The challenge is to integrate support structures and roles to provide all these elements as needed. As noted above, participants on ELT programmes can become supporters of other staff and - importantly - of one another. However, they should not find themselves overwhelmed with requests for technical support from other members of their department - an obvious disincentive to gaining expertise! Institutions need to recognise that effective use of learning technologies by teaching staff will require more specialist support staff rather than less.

Assessment

Two main forms of assessment have been used with the ELT Framework

1 Portfolio of evidence with reflective commentary

Advantages

- May be useful for others professional development purposes
- Emphasises reflection
- Likely to be familiar with ILT and SEDA courses
- Relatively easy to monitor progress and assess against outcomes

Disadvantages

- May be unfamiliar to lecturers who have not taken ILT/SEDA courses
- Risk of box-ticking exercise
- May underplay research agenda and scholarship of teaching
- May therefore be undervalued as an outcome in research-oriented institutions

2 Case study

- May form the basis of a publication and therefore offer academic recognition
- Emphasises evaluation
- Likely to be familiar from academic research activities (especially in social sciences)
- Useful for dissemination to others

- May be unfamiliar to non social- scientists
- May underplay the value of reflecting on evidence
- Requires mapping to learning outcomes and may therefore be more complex.
- May be difficult to evidence all learning outcomes

Ideally programmes should be flexible, recognising that different outcomes will be useful to different participants. Innovative formats are definitely to be encouraged: for example participants might choose to produce a web site or CD-ROM. Practically, however, support staff time or validation requirements may restrict assessment options.

Motivation and participation

Publication and academic recognition are generally more attractive rewards than academic credit for experienced members of staff, though academic credit may be more significant to new staff (particularly in post-92 institutions) and for non-academic staff. For this reason, although we encourage institutions to validate ELT programmes for academic credit, we suggest that they should allow different participants to pursue different outcomes at different levels of achievement, and appropriate to their own specific roles.

Different types of participant may engage differently with CPD: there will be the dropper-in, the workshop junkie, the person-who's-done-it-all-already, the change agent... Taking a concerns-based approach means recognising how individuals work out their identity and role as they engage in CPD.

At present a range of hybrid roles is developing in the area of learning technologies: academic-developers, academic-technologists, technologist-librarians and so on.

Participation in an ELT programme can actually catapult people into one of these hotspots. We feel that developers have some responsibility to work with people in these roles, not only to develop their professional competences but also to articulate more clearly the nature and value of learning technology work.

Programme features which are particularly attractive to staff include:

- Just-in-time training - e.g. to solve specific learning and teaching problems, or respond to specific new agendas;
- Relevant examples of successful embedding - case studies, 'show and tell' events, staff seminars;
- Links to a teaching innovations fund - e.g. support for bidding, evaluating and reporting;
- A positive link to local (departmental) and institutional priorities;

- Publication opportunities;
- Flexibility of attendance;
- One-to-one support.

Embedding programmes into institutional culture

Where possible, ELT programme objectives should be aligned with the objectives of the institution's Learning and Teaching Strategy (LTS). Other strategies from which funding and/or support can be secured for learning technology-related CPD include the Human Resources Strategy and the Information Strategy.

However, we believe that participants on ELT programmes should not be asked to uncritically adopt local learning technology policies or accept the available learning technology infrastructure. The ways in which ELT programmes are linked to institutional policy should not therefore be one-way. As innovators, participants should become sources of information and influence about how policy and infrastructure develop.

Practical mechanisms for integrating an ELT programme with institutional resources for embedding learning technologies include:

- Using LTS resources to support curriculum development projects within the context of ELT;
- Including a question about relevant CPD on bids for internal innovations funding;
- Supporting ELT participants to develop credible bids for internal funding;
- Helping ELT participants to work effectively with institutional support staff;
- Using the experiences of ELT participants to develop a case for more effective learning technologies support.

Institutional accreditation of staff/educational development programmes has been valuable in drawing down resources, providing internal quality assurance, and raising the scholarship of curriculum development. This is usually done

within a postgraduate certificate, diploma or Masters in education. However, we do not see accreditation as an end in itself.

The ELT learning outcomes can also be used as a framework for supporting individuals and groups of staff through small-scale development projects, without being explicitly identified as professional development. Most of us feel, however, that the learning cycle, learning outcomes and developmental philosophy should be made clear, even if individuals decide to use the framework in a purely instrumental way.

It should be no surprise that institutions find it difficult to recruit people with the expertise to develop, deliver and support ELT courses. Such individuals need CPD opportunities of their own. We have found that they - and their institutions - also benefit from time to undertake research and development, and to build inter-institutional networks. None of the lessons identified by EFFECTS can be embedded without skilled and well-resourced developers who are, in turn, critically aware of and reflective about their own practice.

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Some Thoughts on Scholarship

Lewis Elton

In the Editorial for Educational Development 4.3, Brand (2003) gave a run down on present ideas of 'Scholarship', starting with Boyer (1990). However, since until quite recently one meaning of this word was (Collins 1979) "financial aid provided for a scholar because of academic merit", one should dig perhaps a little deeper in searching for the current meaning of the word and the concept it represents. When I did this, some years before Boyer (Elton 1986), I quoted Schwartzman, in Clark (1983), who traced it back to the Humboldtian concept of *Wissenschaft*, which as a concept is somewhat strange to the Anglo-Saxon mind and the importance of which was consequently undervalued at the time. I defined it in terms of a new and/or deeper understanding of what is already known and concluded that:

- Universities should be active in three fields: teaching, scholarship and research;
- Scholarship should influence both teaching and research;
- Work in either teaching or research which is not influenced by scholarship is not fit to be university work.

This last point is most important; acceptance of it would change much teaching and question the appropriateness of some research.

My main concern at the time was to establish the essential conditions for a symbiotic relationship between teaching and research and this remains an important issue. It was re-affirmed by Boyer (1987) when he wrote that 'Scholarship is not an esoteric appendage; it is at the heart of what the profession is all about'. I enlarged on this in a second article (1992), by which time Boyer's ideas had become known, largely through the work of Rice (1991) who systematised Boyer's four forms of scholarship in terms of different ways of knowing, based on two polarities: concrete/abstract and reflective/active, which he linked to the Kolb cycle of learning (Kolb 1984). By an - I feel sure - unintended slight of hand, Rice had moved the discussion from 'scholarship' to 'scholarships' and that is where it has been ever since. Unfortunately, this has led to a confusion between 'scholarship' as an academic practice and 'scholarship' as a means of categorising academic activities. At the same time - and this was a stroke of genius on the part of Boyer - the latter meaning has been used to make certain academic activities academically more respectable than they had been before.

Boyer's and Rice's important contributions were to affirm that scholarship should underlie not only disciplinary research (the scholarship of discovery), but also interdisciplinary work which requires a radically different

approach from disciplinary research (the scholarship of integration), the applications of knowledge (the scholarship of practice) and finally the scholarship of teaching. It is fascinating that Rice found this the most difficult form of scholarship to characterise:

"This is the most difficult form of scholarship to discuss because we do not have the appropriate language. In the working lives of individual faculty, scholarship and teaching are often seen as antithetical - competing for one's time and attention. We want to challenge this understanding and argue that quality teaching requires substantial scholarship that builds on, but is distinct from original research, and that this scholarly effort needs to be recognised and rewarded."

This understanding goes beyond the Humboldtian concept of *Wissenschaft* - incidentally, German academics would not have found the Rice quotation incomprehensible, since they do have the appropriate language - but opens the possibility that the scholarship of teaching should be concerned not only with the what of teaching, but also the how. It is this realisation which has driven much of the recent work of the Carnegie Foundation in the USA and of the Heads of Educational Development Group in this country. And to anyone who doubts that this discussion has a linguistic component I recommend the splendid article by the great Dutch physicist and engineer Casimir (1973).

The next question that arises is whether there are really only four scholarships, or whether this is a consequence of constructing them in terms of the two dichotomies. Is there not for instance a scholarship of assessment and evaluation, which stems from all four branches of the two dichotomies and challenges the very idea of dichotomies? Are we here in another area of not purely linguistic differences between languages? The English tend to be confrontational - between thesis and antithesis, as is epitomised by the form of the House of Commons where government and opposition face each other with a distance just exceeding two sword lengths between them, in contrast to the semicircular debating chambers common on the continent. For instance, we think of education and training as opposites and pass value judgments on them; on the continent they lead to a synthesis, known as *Ausbildung* in German and formation in French, but for which English has no word.

But we must go further than that. Ashby criticised academics for too rarely applying the kind of thought processes which they normally apply to their research to their teaching (Ashby 1969), as well as to their administrative tasks where committee decisions are made 'on the basis of dubious assumptions, scrappy data and mere hunch' (Ashby 1963). Should there be a scholarship

of management and administration? Vice-Chancellors please take note. I would go further and ask, whether there is any activity in universities which cannot or should not be treated in a scholarly manner? A good example arose at the University of Surrey when David Canter used his knowledge of psychology to make for the first time the sign posting system comprehensible. After he had left, further changes to it, which lacked scholarship, restored its earlier incomprehensibility.

Finally, I want to take issue with recent suggestions, quoted in the Editorial, for possible changes to Boyer's four scholarships. A division into research, knowledge and teaching would be quite wrong, since knowledge - which is presumably what is more usually called scholarship or Wissenschaft - is not separate from research and teaching, but an essential part of both; and to separate teaching from learning is akin to separating the two sides of one coin. Rather than modifying Boyer, let us extend his ideas as I have indicated. I would be prepared to offer a small price to anyone who can find an activity carried out in a university which would not benefit from a scholarly component in its treatment but is at present not getting it.

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SEDA-PDF: Update

Anthony Brand, University of Hertfordshire

It is now a year since SEDA-PDF was launched. It has proved to be a popular and robust framework supporting a range of institutions and organisations in the provision of development activities for their staff. The flexible nature of SEDA-PDF is demonstrated by important changes to the initial recognition process and the introduction of two additional named award areas. Now applicant institutions and organisations will have an individually negotiated route through accreditation. A revised fee structure addresses better the situation of the small institutions and organisations. For those who wish to buy into a larger number of named

awards there will be savings of scale. The full range of named awards now includes:

- Supporting Learning
- Learning, Teaching and Assessing
- Enhancing Academic Practice
- Embedding Learning Technologies
- Supervising Postgraduate Research
- Developing Professional Practice
- Developing Leaders
- Enhancing Research Practice

SEDA-PDF seeks to work collaboratively in harmony with the development of the Higher Education Academy and the formulation of a national framework for those supporting teaching and learning.

Anthony Brand is Chair of the SEDA-PDF Committee

Constructivist Principles and Conditions for Learning: Scaffolding Curriculum Design

Mark Schofield

This article presents a framework of constructivist principles that have been applied to curriculum design for 'non-standard' entrants to undergraduate study at Edge Hill, their introduction to 'academic writing' and to support staff at the commencement of their use of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Firstly I will consider scaffolds and models via which induction into Higher Education may be conceptualised using the 'subject' as a focus for skills development. The intention is to provide generic considerations that may inform curriculum planning, pedagogic design and learning support.

I have used a version of social constructivism as the basis for our work. It is characterised by a vision of people in conversation, as such sharing and socially constructing learning. I have found it helpful to consider a set of 'conditions' or 'principles' for learning, which I propose are transferable to students, academic teaching staff and those in support roles in the teaching for learning process.

"A central (constructivist) method is 'real talk' which includes discourse and exploration, talking and listening, questions, argument, speculation, and sharing, but in which domination is replaced by reciprocity and co-operation" (Jarvis 1998 p 73)

Constructivism has a fundamental core component. It is that understanding and knowledge are actively constructed within the individual as a result of the activation of the senses. This involves dynamic processing of sensory information and schematic assembly within the brain of an individual. It involves testing ideas and thoughts against prior knowledge and experience, and integrating the new knowledge and/or understanding with that which preceded it.

There seems to have been some historical agreement. Common trends in the theories of adult learning (constructivism) are

"...that the individual learner is made to think deliberately about the experience in order to learn, must learn how to learn in preparation for future experiences and needs support from others"
(Higher Education Quality and Employability, 1999)

The invitation is for university teachers and others involved in learning support to give thought to how constructivist ideas, principles and conditions for learning may be useful in developing their practice i.e. as a professional development tool or conceptual framework

on which to build. As such constructivist approaches may be useful and worthy of consideration in the teaching/support repertoire.

This portrayal of learning and learners invites consideration of the place of dialogue, participation and language interchange. It emphasises the role of experienced, significant others as guides and facilitators and a notion of 'learning communities'.

The focus below will be upon the use of principles of constructivism to explore and analyse:

- A The 'Skills for Personal Learning' module for induction into undergraduate study at Edge Hill.
- B Scaffolding Academic writing within the above module and in other programmes.
- C Mapping and shaping the way forward in supporting academic staff through the phases of introduction of a virtual learning environment (VLE)

A. The 'Skills for Personal Learning' for induction into undergraduate study module at Edge Hill.

The 'Skills for Personal Learning' module was designed for induction of UK level 1 students into undergraduate study (Schofield 2000). The nature of constructivism and associated conditions/principles is offered as a framework and a basis for analysis of some key issues for educators and support staff who may wish to develop and analyse practice in reference to social constructivist tenets. The approach suggested is grounded in reflective practice.

"Constructivism does not claim to have made earth-shaking inventions in the area of education; it merely claims to provide a solid conceptual basis for some of the things that, until now, inspired teachers had to do without theoretical foundation."
von Glasersfeld (1995 p4)

Bickmore-Brand (1994) offers a range of conditions to support learning, which Pereira (1996) has elaborated as being closely associated with constructivist learning. Bickmore-Brand's seven principles are: Context, Immersion, Scaffolding, Metacognition, Responsibility, Community and Modelling. These ideas are summarised below with exemplification of how they have been used within the 'Skills for Personal Learning' module at Edge Hill. It is offered with the questions:

- How may these principals challenge current practices?
- If these are desirable features, how may they be planned into the specific, unique, contexts in subject learning and in staff development settings?

Context: *Creating a meaningful and relevant context for the 'transmission' of knowledge, skills and values, close to the learners' 'real-world context'.*

Text analysis and construction of writing and group presentations are linked to materials used in concurrent and subsequent modules in the BA Education and Literacy, Level 1 Studies. For example, note-taking strategies will be explored using materials from the first literacy module 'Introduction to the Principles of Language'; internet search skills focus on a chosen educational issue for small-group presentations germane to the 'Perspectives of educational provision' module. There is an endeavour to 'use the time twice'.

Interest: *Realising the starting point for learning is the knowledge, skills and/or values base of the learner.*

Free choice is given in selection of 'interesting' educational issues and contexts for group presentations and in selecting text examples for practising reading and note-making strategies.

Scaffolding: *Challenging learners to go beyond their current thinking, continually increasing their capacities.*

The guidance in the study booklet accompanying the teaching sessions and for assessed portfolio production, contains structured, sequenced questions to support aspects of learning in different contexts. Formal writing scaffolds are offered to support construction of writing and group presentations related to education issues in discussion/argument genre. Reading and writing strategies are supported by scaffolds, which include key questions to address to text to encourage engagement and to help students to identify key features of argument/discussion.

Metacognition *Making explicit the learning processes which are occurring in the learning environment.*

Many opportunities are offered for dialogue about personal learning and for sharing personal ideas/constructs and to talk about learning in 'plenary' sessions. This is linked to development of personal modes, and often, individual theories of learning. Portfolio (assessment) guidance is scaffolded such that reflective writing encourages metacognitive thinking and dialogue about learning in different contexts.

Responsibility: *Developing in learners the capacity for developing increasingly more responsibility for their learning.*

The student drives the selection of most of the foci of the evidence-based portfolio for assessment of their learning; takes prime responsibility for its management over the academic year, identifies C and IT support needs, and decides to opt into 'drop-in' C and IT sessions for bespoke support from Learning Services personnel.

Community: *Recognising that a supportive group dynamic and opportunities for dialogue supports learning.*

A sense of learning community is analysed via group tasks aimed at specifying factors that determine a comfortable learning climate in the teaching group and in chosen sub-groups for research and presentation tasks. Expectations of individuals, groups and the tutor are openly discussed and agreement pursued. This is in two phases; early in the course in "anticipation" and later in "reflection" on the tutor's facilitation and on group dynamics and operations. Some study of group development is undertaken using the Tuckman Model of group life (Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing).

Modelling: *Providing the opportunities to see the knowledge, skills and/or values in operation by a 'significant' other.*

Tutors consciously model effective communication and interpersonal skills that facilitate a good learning environment and sense of community. Specific modelling of construction of argument around education issues is undertaken using writing scaffolds (see Lewis and Wray, 1995 for a full rationale for 'writing frames'). Tutors model metacognitive strategies in their articulation of their understanding of learning events during group sessions.

The items above represent the focus we used for debate and challenge at the point of conception of this module. It offers a framework (scaffold) for adding value to curriculum design and implementation in a range of teaching contexts, and provides a tool for analysis and debate about teaching for learning. Items may be extrapolated for consideration by those in learning support roles to their work with students and academic staff in 'partnership', particularly in skills training with particular focus on context, scaffolding and modelling.

The case study and principles above are a tool which may be used as a focus for contextualising training for students e.g. in C and IT use, academic writing, demonstration, discussion, problem solving etc. Similarly it may be used to examine existing practice with a mind to adoption, adaptation or development of these constructivist approaches. Our experience has been one of collaboration between the academic and learning support staff, focussed on embedding skills in the student experience of their subject. This is in opposition to decontextualised, 'bolt-on', training episodes. This way of working is now a key maxim at Edge Hill and is characteristic of the collaboration between academic and learning support staff in what our Head of Learning Services cites as the evolution of 'New Academic Teams'.

B. Scaffolding academic writing

The notion of 'scaffolding' has been extended to supporting Level 1 undergraduates with the conceptualisation of the 'Form' of academic writing. This may be represented simply as an equation:

$$\text{Purpose + Audience} \longrightarrow \text{Form}$$

Discussing and exploration around this and evidence from student feedback, indicates improved understandings of components and assembly of coursework and students feeling more secure in preparation for their first assessments. A similar approach has been adopted to support writing at postgraduate level for graduates returning to study after a significant gap.

The approach of using a framework scaffold has been used to support students when producing writing in a discursive genre. It provides an analysis and organisational scaffold, albeit a simple one, via which note making and ideas can be assembled as a prelude to writing. The scaffold is as follows:

Scaffolding Discussion Genre

(i.e. Working with arguments/standpoints/contrasting evidence)

Lowest Level

Some people think

Other people think

I think

Next Level

Some people think
...because

Other people think
...because

I think ...because

Higher Level

(to which we aspire to in Level 1 and beyond)

Some people think
...because
(plus interrogation of
ideas and evidence)

Other people think
...because
(plus interrogation of
ideas and evidence)

I think ... because
Plus explanation/analysis
of interrogation
(i.e. synthesis)

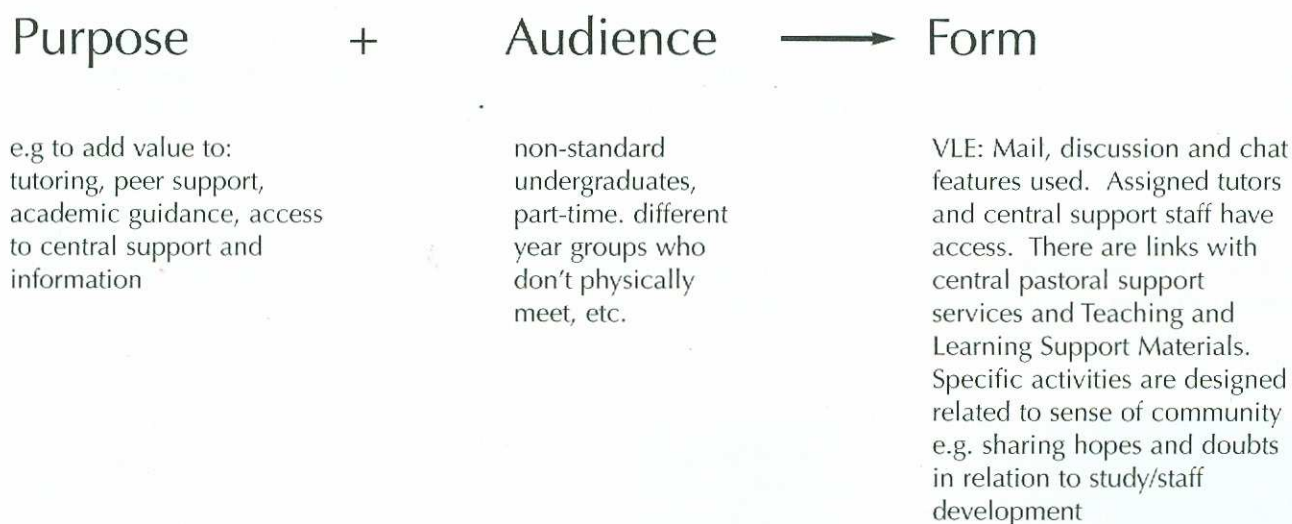
It was proposed that the usefulness of such scaffolding is in extending learners' ideas and their coherent assembly of thoughts. It helped to make expectations of writing this form explicit and assists engagement with the assessment process.

C. Mapping and shaping the way forward in supporting academic and other staff through the phases of introduction of a virtual learning environment (VLE).

So what more of constructivism and associated conditions? The notion of a functional community of learners (e.g. students; academics; academics and learning support staff) may be desirable if productive learning and staff development is to be achieved.

The model used in extending the dynamics of face to face support by convening a student community in a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in the 'Skills for Personal Learning Module' recognises the centrality of dialogue and interaction in learning (which extends to learning support).

So what? The scaffolding approach (models, frameworks, key questions) may be used to consider the successful establishment of a VLE community (either to support face to face interactivity or as an alternative). We have again found the scaffold integrating purpose, audience and form useful. It is annotated (in a highly abridged form) to offer a flavour of how it has been used in the context of the 'Skills for Personal Learning' module in order to consider features of design and pedagogy using a VLE.



The possibility of transferability of such a scaffolded, approach to planning a support strategy for academic staff or for learning support staff and technology designers to engage with implementation of VLE approaches is also suggested (Sackville, Schofield and Davey 2002).

Lewis and Wray (1995) offer a model, which includes the notion of scaffolding, as a framework for introducing learners to unfamiliar types of writing. It may be that this sequential model of Immersion, Modelling, Joint Construction, Independence provides a transferable scaffold for considering approaches in academic / professional development roles. Below are examples of its use in considering the introduction of students to academic writing and its use to the introduction of VLE use (in our case WebCT) to academic staff at Edge Hill.

Introduction of Academic Writing at Level 1

1 Immersion Immersion in key readings appropriate to the subject/discipline. Introduction of academic texts, journal papers, articles etc. Reading lists.

2 Modelling The Tutor models the construction of pieces of writing in the 'academic form' (e.g. abstracts, introductions, conclusions). The Tutor models how they undertake preparation for academic writing by reading with students and explicitly, 'vocally' articulate the components, devices etc that are desirable features to be learned.

3 Scaffolding Writing scaffolds may be synthesised in relation to the learning outcomes and assessment task, and related to the modelling activities above.

4 Joint Construction Tutor and students jointly construct pieces of academic writing around jointly researched themes/arguments. Peer/Group, collaborative construction is emphasised. Students research and assemble a piece of writing for formative feedback (including that of peers).

5 Independence Students progress to first assessment point with differentiated amounts of support and challenge, having been immersed in the writing process in alignment with the expectations of assessment.

The History of introduction of a VLE into the 'Skills for Personal Learning Module'

1. Immersion (not sinking!) Tutors experienced a variety of exemplars and were introduced to the VLE tools and ways of interacting on line. The "art of the possible" using VLEs was considered in discussions.

2. Modelling "Show and Tell" sessions were organised with demonstration from, then, current VLE users. "Possibilities for me and my students" were considered after introductions to discipline related exemplars, demonstrations, presentations etc from experienced teaching and learning support staff.

3. Scaffolding Use of design rubrics and training in the use of tools for interactivity were offered. The presence of guidance from a Learning Technology Designer was maintained.

4. Joint Construction Guided apprenticeship in design and assembly of item/s in the VLE was undertaken. This was achieved by allocation of 'critical friends' with greater experience and Learning Services personnel.

5. Independence Solo design for assembly and use of a VLE, its maintenance and building activities, incorporating web-links etc. was and is encouraged

A key 'challenge question' emerges as to how support is offered at each stage. Here, reflecting on the specific stages (1-5 above) with the formula of 'Purpose' and 'Audience' in order to determine the 'Form' is a possible way forward, so that bespoke pace of progression through the model and customised support may be offered.

In conclusion, it is suggested that scaffolds such as those presented here may facilitate individual and group construction of curriculum design, and aid aspects of pedagogy and learning support. The potential usefulness is not solely in the form of the scaffolds themselves, but also in the accompanying dialogue between academic and learning support staff and students that they may participate in a 'Learning Community'.

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Book Reviews

The digital revolution and the coming of the postmodern university

Carl A. Raschke

Routledge Falmer (2003)

£18.99 pbk

ISBN: 0-415-36984-3

This small book (114 pages) is simultaneously one of the most interesting and the most irritating books that it has been my pleasure to read for sometime. Interesting, because it deals so insightfully with the issues surrounding the impact of the digital revolution on higher education; and irritating because underlying the author's argument is an almost naïve faith in democracy that eventually prevents him from dealing effectively with one of the most critical issues for those of us who teach in higher education: the role of the tutor. However, the book has many strengths and it is those that I first want to call to readers' attention.

At the outset of the book he asserts that it is "...as much about the shape of knowledge production in the postmodern era as it is about the ... 'university'." Overall the book develops the argument that the 'architecture' of digital communication necessitates a re-thinking of the structure of knowledge in ways that are necessarily consistent with the philosophical slant of postmodernism. This can be seen in the coming shift from the university to the 'hyperuniversity' as the locus of knowledge production. In the pre-digital era, the university can be understood as a physical place in which scholars engage in the production of knowledge. However, its physicality is, for Raschke, also emblematic of the ways in which the production of knowledge is limited and controlled (authorised) by such social structures.

The capacity for what he calls 'internet working', however, transcends these physical limitations and, in a specifically postmodern sense, 'decenters' the production of knowledge. As information can be easily published and reflected upon by anyone, anywhere, who is connected to the Internet, the production of knowledge need no longer be localised within institutions whose authority sanctions its production. This access to information and the tools of knowledge production can be understood as a new 'hyperknowledge' space with a more complex architecture whose centreless 'locus' of production is a fully democratised 'hyperuniversity'.

This brief resume doesn't do justice to the quality of Professor Raschke's text. The stages in the central transition under discussion and their inevitability are very convincingly argued and readers should not dismiss lightly the full implications of a view of higher education that philosophically no longer needs physical universities. At

one point Raschke argues that the digital revolution is the third significant 'knowledge revolution': the first two being the development of language and the development of writing. This is probably not an exaggeration. The capacity for anyone to inscribe their knowledge in any medium or collection of media and publish it ad libitum has implications for human society that may prove as transforming as writing or even language.

However, the book does eventually disappoint with respect to one highly significant issue. How, in a world of completely decentred and democratised knowledge production, can one know which knowledge(s) to value?

Unfortunately, this is not a question that Raschke ever convincingly deals with. In the main, he dismisses the question with polemic arguing that those who ask the question represent an ancien regime desperately trying to protect their own positions of authority. Raschke does recognise that polemics are not enough and seems to indicate that 'self-respecting pedagogues' will help knowledge producers learn to intelligently 'self-select' knowledge.

Disappointingly, for those of us engaged in academia to whom this task may fall, he provides very little guidance about how it is to be conducted or what critical methodologies may be needed by those engaged in the production of hyperknowledge.

This is perhaps not too surprising. The digital revolution is only just occurring and the point of the book is to alert the university community to an emergent set of issues for which there are as yet no very clear resolutions. However, it is a little surprising that an author who is clearly imbued with the traditions of American Pragmatic Philosophy doesn't more openly engage with the implications of its epistemological focus on the activity of knowing rather than the architecture of knowledge.

Perhaps his pragmatism is simply too deeply embedded. The book is very American - in its orientation to its audience, its vision of higher education and ultimately in its underlying confidence in the capacity of the demos to critically 'self-select' from the plethora of digital information and construct not only knowledge but, implicitly, wisdom. Speaking as an American, I know that many of my British colleagues will not share this enthusiasm, but ultimately that is not a reason for not engaging with Professor Raschke's admirable book and the serious issues it raises

Bruce Douglas Ingraham

Teaching Fellow

University of Teesside

Please note:

In Educational Developments 4.2 we published an account by Bruce Ingraham of an electronic readability and accessibility workshop. Unfortunately we printed the wrong url.

The projects website can be found at:

<http://readability.tees.ac.uk>

We apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused.

Leading and Managing for Effective Education

Effective Educational Leadership

Bennett, N., Crawford, M. and M. Cartwright

ISBN 0 7619 4056 6 (pbk)

Strategic Leadership and Educational Improvement

Preedy, M., Glatter, R. and C. Wise

ISBN 0 7619 4058 8 (pbk)

Leading People and Teams in Education

Kydd, L., Anderson, L. and W. Newton,

ISBN 0 7619 4060 X (pbk)

Open University/Paul Chapman Publishing

These three volumes provide the readings for an OU Masters level unit: Leading and Managing for Effective Education. The texts are intended to be 'an essential resource' for anyone engaged in educational and leadership development courses - for example headteacher induction courses - and for practitioners occupying or aspiring to leadership roles in schools, colleges and other educational programmes.

This immediately raises the question as to whether there are generic issues about leadership which can apply equally well to a budding primary school head as to anyone in a university context with an interest in leading people. The evidence from these volumes is a resounding 'yes'. Clearly managerialism is as much an issue in First Schools, Secondary Schools, and FE as it is in universities. There is much in these texts that is of interest to educational developers who have some sort of leadership role, of which there are many.

An interesting statistic: 88% of respondents in a survey of an Australian university (re-published here) considered knowledge and skills in academic leadership to be important in their role, but only 58% of respondents thought they needed to develop their skills in leadership. So was it that 30% thought they were as good a leader as they could be, or that they thought leadership was not a matter of skills that could be learned? The latter view would have been even more popular, I suspect, a few years ago. The idea that leadership is a set of learnable skills has become a political dogma with the current government who, having created and required qualifications in leadership for school headteachers, are now, through the White Paper, turning their attention to leadership and governance in higher education.

Several of the writers in these volumes point out that leadership is a 'construct', an 'invention' and there is talk of 'indeterminacy' and 'shifting ground'.

Nevertheless, there is clearly no shortage of theories and typologies of leadership, and not a few empirical studies reported in these volumes. They include, for example, chapters on the characteristics of educational organisations, the meaning of professional development, understanding strategic development, control and collegiality, vulnerability of middle managers and the emotional dimensions to leadership.

Many of the contributors discuss the question of the 'culture' of organisations and how far this culture is amenable to change. This is surely a critical issue at the heart of educational development. In a fascinating piece, in the volume Strategic Leadership and Educational Improvement, Michael Fullan argues that educational reform fails because of 'excessive rationalisation'. He argues 'The fallacy of rationalism is the assumption that the social world can be altered by seemingly rational argument'. He emphasises that meanings have to be negotiated, that one can't just implement a vision but needs to enter into an exchange of views and accept that resistance is something to be understood and not to be ignored. It is essential that there be disagreements in order to clarify what should be done and he reminds us that 'changing the culture is the real agenda not implementing single innovations.

There is a tendency towards use of jargon in these three volumes, e.g. 'reculturing', 'neo-institutionalism' and, a favourite of mine, 'decentred centralism', but readers should not allow themselves to be deterred by such lapses. The editors have put together a fine collection of articles, which are of considerable interest to educational developers who continually face the question 'How do I help to bring about change?' Exposure to a literature that takes us outside the narrow confines of educational development in higher education can only be positive. We can learn from other educational sectors and we should.

David Gosling,
Open University

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The Move To Terms: The Implications for Educational Developers

James Wisdom

It was Ray Land who started this article off. He did it at the 1999 SEDA conference while he was presenting his influential paper on the twelve "Orientations to Educational Development" (a version of this was published in *Educational Developments*, issue 1.2). Like all good bombshells, he just dropped it while talking about something else: "Of course, modularity is just modernism in HE" and now we are in the post, or post post modernist age, modularity just won't do any more.

Then Alison Utley wrote a piece in the THES (October 4th 2002) entitled: "Students choke on bite-sized learning", reporting the abandonment of semesters at Huddersfield University, with similar moves planned at Glamorgan and Plymouth Universities. The by-line read that HU was ditching "fashionable" modularisation for traditional year-long courses. "Is this the start of a semesterisation backlash?" she asked, and highlighted a quotation from Bob Brecher at Brighton: "Huddersfield has shown a welcome readiness to admit that modularisation was a mistake." At the same time De Montfort published its two-year plan: "Curriculum 2004 - the Move to Terms".

Ever since Joyce Barlow and Rakesh Bhanot organised SEDA's S&M conference at Luton in 1995 and risked attracting some surprising participants, the language of this debate has been clumsy. Semesterisation, modularisation and unitisation are perhaps the least graceful words in our lexicon. We have always had forms of modularity in higher education - most commonly, choosing pathways and options through "linear" degrees -

but the reshaping of courses around standardised units has been a major reform perceived by its protagonists as the modernisation of the institution and of its education. By concentrating on the word "modularity" we sometimes obscure significant questions about the shape of the academic year and the amount of assessment required. Whether the institution used terms or semesters was seen as less significant than that it reformed using standardised units described by credit values.

Re-forming into units and achieving equivalence through statements of credit compelled the implicit to become the explicit - what was once in our heads, our hearts or even our guts, was now on paper. In the 1980s I often heard lines like "... well it may have been a lot of work, but at least it has forced them to think what they are doing - perhaps for the first time!" (It is always *them*, by the way.) For the educational developer this could have been an opportunity to engage with real educational reform, but if it was done in a hurry, or as a paper exercise, or a technical fix, then it was often an opportunity lost.

It was not easy. Other than David Robertson, whose influential "Choosing to Change" was published in 1994, there were few who could lead this reform on a platform of educational values. It could be cast as part of the democratic and modernising agenda, enabling more citizens across Europe to develop their knowledge and skills for a world in which traditional divisions of knowledge were becoming irrelevant, but it was more likely to be promoted as a technical reform, and was therefore easy to attack as cheapening education, reducing standards, turning students into

consumers and allowing the dreaded "pic n' mix" (the educational sweetshop where you could buy your Mickey Mouse degree).

Since the early 1990s most institutions have learned to live with their modular, semestered frameworks, perhaps revising them once or twice in the light of experience. For example, the introduction of Sheffield Hallam's new academic framework has led to a substantial shift from "short, fat" to "long, thin" modules. Are the moves to terms (or, in the cases of Oxford Brookes and Edinburgh, the moves from terms to semesters) evidence of a wider reform process which tells us something important about our current higher education practice? Or are they simply the sorts of changes that happen when institutions get confident with modularity?

The one feature which appears to be common between the revisions occurring at the moment is the altering of the pattern of assessment - in particular, removing the requirement for summative assessment (and particularly supervised unseen exams) at the end of the first semester of the students' first year. From this, most other developments can follow. The idea of modularity may remain, but with modules running through the year. Of course, the number and their size (in terms of credit points or notional learning hours) are a matter for the individual universities.

The other common feature is a concern to improve the students' first year as a whole. This is particularly important in those universities which specialise in welcoming all students who are keen to learn (and perhaps the few who are not) but who don't have glittering "A" level results.

The implication is that the previous frameworks have not provided the opportunities to successfully teach the students from diverse backgrounds with varied expectations and levels of preparedness - that a semestered academic year might not be the one which most supports the sorts of experience many first year students now need.

Removing exams at the end of the first semester allows for the restoration of the Spring Term as a major period of learning. Exam periods before or just after Christmas have been clumsy, assessment and exam boards are slow and laborious, and the inter-semester period has grown. Brendan Evans, the PVC at Huddersfield, noted in the THES article that many students are just getting engaged with the conceptual difficulties and complexities of their subjects when their first exams are due. For students whose first term has not been successful - upheavals in their friendships, bewildering subjects and the often grim experiences of mass HE - the threat of exams can be the last straw.

Of course, there are some students who welcome exams, often those who have done well in a very schooled environment and whose conceptions of learning revolve around the rhythm of lectures - revision - exams. The student voice in these changes is hard to hear. Is student feedback from previous years one of the elements which is pushing the reformers on? Or holding the reformers back? Would the students' views even matter? After all, if retention rates improve, then hasn't the quality of the students' experience improved as well?

These revisions can appeal to the staff. The burden of over-assessment is widely acknowledged, and many colleagues are looking for better ways to ensure students learn from feedback. Reshuffling semesters can force assessment reform. Another benefit from taking out these exams and trimming the Christmas and Easter breaks might be to shuffle the timetable into a more worthwhile research period in the summer for

those whose lives are dominated by the demands of the RAE. At the same time there are so many re-sits, referrals and deferrals that the "third semester" is already experienced by many as a curious form of voluntary work.

We learnt in the 1980s from the efforts to install standard units in semestered years that these changes were not merely administrative alterations but they were a real and profound pedagogical change. Will we be able to put that learning to use when we turn the wheel again?

Consider the interaction between assessment and semestered modules. From the early 1970s there had been a growing opposition to the big-bang terminating exams - three years study, ten days writing, life and career in the balance. Continuous assessment was offered as a more effective way to support learning, with feedback which helped the student and accumulated marks which reduced the panic. It does not feel like that today. The widespread use of the same pedagogical model - of teaching first, then testing - bunches mid-module assignments and end-of-module exams. Students might get feedback from the assignments (perhaps delayed, if there are many students) but they very rarely get learning opportunities in feedback from their exams - and there is anecdotal evidence of students no longer bothering to collect end-of-module work after it has been assessed. Now, in a long module, it may be possible to vary the pedagogic structure (such as introducing problem based learning), to introduce a more varied range of assessments and to offer more developmental feedback.

Consider also the interaction between skills development and semestered modules. There is no doubt that some students today need to actively learn many of the academic conventions - constructing argument, writing well, putting forward ideas in seminars. There is also no doubt that many academic colleagues have preferred to emphasise the teaching of content and have hoped that someone else

will ensure the students are equipped to study appropriately. In a semestered unit they may mark one piece of work and never teach that student again - in a year-long unit there is a chance they (or their team) could oversee the development of a student's writing through possibly three pieces of work.

Consider also the dialogue which students could have in the design and progress of their modules. The end-of-unit questionnaire is ubiquitous and often useless. Rather than engage students in a shared approach to improving their learning, it often appeals to them as much as someone with a clip board approaching them in the street - and the completion rates show it. But when a lecturer asks for interim feedback, when a module can be tweaked and improved while it is running, when there is time to reflect on the process of learning, then the students' experience can be improved.

With any major revision of the programme framework there are opportunities to improve the quality of student learning, and educational developers are well accustomed to working with such occasions. But there are also huge pressures which can strip out the value. Any university-wide reform is going to require resourcing, or colleagues may have to use short cuts: "Let's just knock two modules together, end on end, and have an interim in-class test instead of a proper exam. Let's just find a form of words and run some blanket revalidation process. We haven't got a lot of time for all this"

There are some significant differences between the resources we had when modularity was introduced and the circumstances today. In many universities the educational development units are now better staffed and more integrated into their institutions, more skilled at deploying expertise. There are more colleagues with explicit developmental responsibilities - institutional and national Teaching Fellows and Learning and Teaching Coordinators

in Schools and Departments, networked through generic educational development and their own subject groups. Many institutions have learnt from having had to wrestle with programme specifications and explicit skills development frameworks. There is greater institutional experience of designing and delivering proper educational change through Learning and Teaching Strategies, and a growing recognition of the value of well-constructed policies (an institutional assessment policy is particularly significant for these revisions). Most institutions have hosted at least one of the enhancement projects under the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning.

At De Montfort, which has allowed two years to effect the change, there has been a programme of development activity to support the policy. While the responsibility for implementing the changes ran down from Quality Assurance and Registry through the Faculty structure, the Quality Enhancement Department were charged with supporting the changes to maximise opportunities for improving the student learning experience. To this end they published materials, organised workshops (for awareness first, then for focused, grounded local support) and continue to be engaged in supporting colleagues in the departments in their preparations for the changes which will be implemented on all undergraduate programmes in September 2004.

The revisions to the academic year are not all following the same pattern. A number of institutions (for example, Staffordshire and London Met) are offering January or February as a second entry date and having therefore to reinforce their divided first year, while offering choice and tackling retention targets. If the early promise of credit accumulation was ever to be supported through funding by unit rather than by programme, we might see some very significant changes to the academic year.

Of course, if the proposal to recruit after "A" Level results are known takes hold, then we may find the shape of the academic year changing from the current medieval rent-days which have done us so well ...

It would not be fair to say that these revisions are being welcomed everywhere with open arms by staff who relish the opportunity to redesign all their teaching plans and assessments - in the early stages at least it can appear to be yet another wallop from the dead hand of bureaucracy.

What appears to be happening is that new policies are emerging - more about semesters than primarily about modularity - partly for educational reasons but mainly for pragmatic institutional reasons, in places where the agendas for access, diversity and retention are at their strongest. Sometimes these policies appear at first to be technical fixes for each module, best handled by an administrative re-validation process in a short timescale. But they are not. In reality they are major curriculum reforms affecting the design of whole programmes. Therefore educational developers need to be engaged in the creation of the policy to ensure that the work is driven by enhancement and that assurance activity does not overwhelm it. They also need to argue for time and resources to achieve the changes. If there are good networks in place, developers can be at their most effective by deploying their energy, expertise and information through them - institution-wide development on this scale needs to be locally owned. Ideally, they need to be engaging with the students through the process, and to be evaluating throughout, both to amend policy and to monitor the process.

James Wisdom is a freelance educational developer.

He wishes to thank Jane Clarke at De Montfort and Sue Burkill at Plymouth for their help in preparing this article.

SEDA Welcomes the Higher Education Academy

SEDA warmly supports Professor Leslie Wagner's view that the 'Academy provides a unique opportunity to demonstrate the sector's commitment to enhancing the student experience' (Higher Education Academy prospectus, August 2003). The purposes of the Higher Education Academy align closely with SEDA's core mission, 'to improving all aspects of learning, teaching and training in higher education through staff and educational development.' SEDA welcomes the fact that the growing number of staff and educational developers in higher education embrace a wide range of key strategic roles and positions such as School and Faculty Teaching and Learning Coordinators and pedagogic project leaders.

SEDA Fellowships provide professional recognition of all staff and educational developers and SEDA's Professional Development Framework (PDF) ensures professional development programmes are supported and informed by specialist communities of practice. SEDA looks forward to working in close collaboration with the Academy and to this end has engaged in very positive meetings with Professor Wagner and the project manager, Mr John Webster.

Dr Kristine Mason O'Connor,
Co-Chair of the SEDA Executive Committee

Review of research assessment: SEDA's response to the UK Funding Councils' Consultation

Ranald Macdonald, FSED, Chair SEDA Research Committee

Introduction

This is a response to the UK Funding Councils' joint consultation (May 2003/22) on the review by Sir Gareth Roberts (May 2003/22) from the Executive of SEDA and the SEDA Research Committee. The latter has representatives from SEDA's various interests, SRHE, ILTHE, ALT, LSDN, LTSN Generic and Subject Centres, and individuals from a number of institutions with an interest in research into staff and educational development. However, their involvement in this response is in an individual capacity and does not signify the agreement of their organisations or institutions.

This response reflects SEDA's position as the professional association for staff and educational developers in the UK, promoting innovation and good practice in higher education. SEDA is committed to improving all aspects of learning, teaching and training in higher education through staff and educational development. In making this response we reflect one of our values: "a commitment to scholarship, professionalism and ethical practice" through encouraging research into and about our practice.

We are presenting a response to those recommendations in which SEDA has a legitimate interest; members' institutions are likely to take a wider view.

Recommendation 1

Any system of research assessment designed to identify the best research must be based upon the judgement of experts who may, if they choose, employ performance indicators to inform their judgement.

We are concerned that the selection of 'experts' should be transparent so

as to ensure that the interests of hitherto neglected groups (such as the academic development research community) are brought into the process and valued, rather than being sidelined as at present. The review of institutional capability, including as it does pedagogical research, might benefit from including representatives of groups such as SEDA and SRHE on the panel.

Recommendation 3

b. The competences to be assessed should be institutional research strategy, development of researchers, equal opportunities, and dissemination beyond the peer group.

We believe that institutional research strategies should include encouragement for inter- and multi-professional research into learning, teaching and assessment and the processes necessary to develop and enhance them. This includes ensuring that institutional research and learning, teaching and assessment strategies make the link between subject/discipline research and teaching the discipline as well as research into the teaching of the discipline (pedagogic research).

The practices and results of the last Research Assessment Exercise seriously undermined the previous commitment to encouraging and rewarding these aspects. We also have a serious concern that, by designating this body of activity a competence, it will not receive the same sort of grading (and hence neither status nor funding) that other units of assessment will. This will marginalise research in these crucial areas at a critical point in the development of the HE sector.

'Dissemination beyond the peer group' should recognise the collaborative nature, and increasing amount, of research into learning and teaching and its subsequent dissemination.

Recommendation 6

a. There should be between 20 and 25 units of assessment panels supported by around 60 sub-panels. Panels and sub-panels should be supported by colleges of assessors with experience of working in designated multidisciplinary 'thematic' areas.

Multidisciplinary 'thematic' areas should include higher education itself as well pedagogic research of a generic and subject-specific nature.

However, we are concerned that, unless pedagogic research is clearly part of a discrete unit of assessment or an explicit criteria in all other units, it is likely to be marginalised.

Recommendation 7

b. Research Quality Assessment panels should ensure that their criteria statements enable them to guarantee that practice-based and applicable research are assessed according to criteria which reflect the characteristics of excellence in those types of research in those disciplines.

Much of the practice-based and applicable research into higher education is of a multi- or inter-professional nature and, if it is pedagogic research, seeks to make the link between research, policy and practice, often at an institutional or sectoral level.

Similarly, the production of research texts is often a reflection of both excellence in researching the

discipline and similar excellence in research into the development of learning and teaching within the disciplines. This practice-based and applicable research needs to be duly recognised and rewarded. Further, text-books are often produced as an outcome of a scholarly and research-based approach to learning and teaching.

Recommendation 8

a. *The funding councils should work alongside the subject communities and the research councils to develop discipline-specific performance indicators.*

In addition to subject communities the funding councils should also work with professional associations and groups, many of who support and engage in inter-professional and cross-institutional research, to develop criteria and performance indicators. In particular, we are concerned that cross-institutional pedagogic research should be recognised and rewarded.

Recommendation 9

b. *The funding councils should establish and promote a facility for work to be submitted as the output of a group rather than an individual where appropriate.*

c. *The funding councils should consider what measures could be taken to make joint submission more straightforward for institutions.*

Joint submissions should also apply to individuals/groups in different institutions and professional organisations as this research, particularly into the development of learning and teaching, can have a significant impact on policy and practice across the whole higher education sector. It might also be considered as to whether individual researchers would benefit from establishing a critical mass and being able to submit their work through a relevant national body such as SEDA or SRHE.

Question 13

Equality of opportunity for all groups of staff

The funding councils wish to promote equality of opportunity for all staff regardless of age, sexual orientation, political belief, disability, gender, race or religion and seek to ensure that its research assessment policies are compatible with this objective. How successful do you consider that the proposals of the research assessment review are in this respect?

By not giving full recognition to the research activities of those engaged in pedagogic research, and possibly in education more generally, research assessment may lead to injustices, not least on the grounds of gender if, as suspected, there is a higher proportion of women than in most subjects. To ensure equality of opportunity there would need to be greater flexibility for part-time researchers, career breaks and so on.

Question 15

Further comments

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Roberts report. However, SEDA Executive and the SEDA Research Committee are concerned that the proposals outlined in the Roberts report may undermine the important and growing link between research and teaching. With greater selectivity and division between the two activities the important synergies will be lost, particularly in those institutions which are forced to move towards becoming 'teaching only'. The lack of recognition of the rigour and impact of pedagogical research, including areas such as research into staff and educational development, means that this type of applied and applicable research may not be funded, with significant consequences for improvements in learning and teaching and higher

education development.

Similarly, the lack of integration between HEFCE's strategies on research, learning and teaching, and widening participation is likely to undermine both the Higher Education Academy and Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, where their commitments to scholarship and pedagogic research may not be valued or supported by institutions which will see the subsequent research activities not being recognised, rewarded or funded.

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Hanging on in there a long way from home: retention and support for the learning success of international postgraduates

Gina Wisker, FSEDA

The other day, I sat under a blue balloon in a large room with Ravi, an Indian MSc computing science student and talked with him about his learning and preparation for his first assessment. Of course he wouldn't have just come in to chat with me but it was part of APU's (Anglia Polytechnic University) 'lighten up week' session. The room was well lit, lively, music was playing, there was plenty of tea-time cake and tea/coffee, and little groups of red shirted student helpers were chatting with the first years.

I want to concentrate here on the growing number of international postgraduates we now see entering higher education. Many of these students come to the UK (as they do to the US and Australia) for a specialised postgraduate experience, and they probably arrive with a sense of their own success as learners, because, after all, they have achieved an undergraduate degree. But they could also arrive with, or soon develop, two kinds of culture shock related to context and to learning demands which might hamper their learning.

Ravi was very puzzled. Here was a very able, articulate student, at sea in a different culture both in terms of the UK (cold, getting darker, strange food) and in terms of the learning expected of him - new terminology, and epistemology, much more independence and little guidance as to how to use it, longer assignments without models, a new learning level which seemed to demand a great deal of reading, all of which felt rather like a load of strange facts, facts to be learned up and repeated perhaps?

Ravi's discussion with me chimed well with the university's focus on embedding a continuing form of induction to enable new students to settle in successfully, and with research we have been doing over the last few years at APU into the learning of international postgraduates. It chimed equally well with the developmental support we have been putting in place for a variety of students in order to aid them in their learning (and to hang on to them!).

All students, international and home originated, need some direction about the learning demands at this new stage -undergraduate or postgraduate- which they face when entering a new university. It is not enough to meet and greet them and load them up with information and pamphlets about the university and its requirements then expect them to settle in and easily adopt the new learning

approaches and behaviours demanded. There could be less accumulation and regurgitation experienced, perhaps, more critical thinking and problem-solving, certainly more independent learning and time management, close scrutiny of assessment deadlines, learning outcomes, assessment formats and criteria. Students need to be made aware of the learner support available for honing writing skills, for developing the discourse of the subject. To just launch students and hope they 'hang on in there' with us is unlikely to lead to successful retention of students, and particularly of international postgraduate students. Week eleven and even the postgraduates are finding it a steep learning curve. But the international postgraduates are finding it a steep cultural learning curve too, and often one which they feel most confused about.

Putting into practice some suggestions about induction, ongoing support for tertiary literacy and culturally sensitive learning development practices for international postgraduates could reduce such anxiety, and enable students to be more successful, settled and focused on their studies. Some supportive practices we and others have discovered (Hughes and Wisker, 1998. Todd, 1996, Yorke, 1999, Waller, Griffiths, Wu, Illes, Wisker, 2001, Brown, Creighton, Freckleton, Wisker 2002) include:

- Continuing induction and 'bring back' sessions focusing on settling in, meeting new learning challenges, demystifying study expectations and practices;
- Establishing student mentors to be supportive, friendly faces;
- Involvement of learner support, student services, the students' union and the learning and teaching centre (UCLT in our case at APU);
- Ongoing action research linked to development of practice with the teachers and learning facilitators, and focused on student learning, international student learning and postgraduate international student learning - but leading directly to
 - Support for tertiary literacy, workshop and development work aimed to encourage students to succeed in coping with the demands of conceptualising their learning, carrying out learning and assessment tasks, including developing and completing dissertations and theses, successfully;

- Clarity about learning behaviours and approaches expected in higher education for undergraduates and postgraduates alike, in the context of international students because such approaches and practices may be unfamiliar to them. These include: Accessing the information and making it your own, adding to knowledge in an original way, creating new knowledge. This is very much a postgraduate enterprise but very daunting when you are 'at sea' in a new level of learning, a new culture, even a new subject area;
- Setting up situations which encourage students to mix socially and in the learning environment, in learning situations, encouraging them to make friends from different cultures, and learn from each others' conceptualisation of and approach to learning so that all involved start to have a truly internationalised experience;
- Encouraging reflection and recognition of achievement as part of the systems in tutorial, mentoring, classroom activity, so that students start to be able to recognise that they are indeed successful at coping with cultural difference and differences in learning demands and therefore, hanging on in there, staying the course and gaining the qualification as well as a rich culturally inflected learning experience.

Increasingly in the mid-1990s, there was a strong emphasis on the 'internationalisation' of higher education (Green, 1996), expressly conceived in Australia as an 'export commodity' (Adams 1995; cited in Green, 1996: p.1).

However, there has been very little systematic response at an institutional level, with regard to addressing the needs of both international postgraduate students and their respective teachers or supervisors (Parker, Kirkpatrick, and Slaney, 1996). There is a need for development of cross-cultural understanding, and the recognition and support of cultural identity. There is also a need for the development of English language, discipline-specific communication skills, particularly for those students who have not had prior demands to

engage extensively in English language usage.

The issue of 'tertiary literacy' becomes an important one, conceptualised here to move debate beyond a preoccupation with the acquisition of English reading and writing competencies. Tertiary literacy (Edelsky, 1991) instead is about subject specific support for students to develop the discourse of their subject at postgraduate level and so do justice to the complexity of their conceptualisation and thought processes rather than, as some do, feeling hampered by working in another, hybrid, language.

Another issue is that of the accessibility of the language, the research matter and the supervisory and training discourses with which students must become familiar. Much is said about the high expectations and dependency of international students including postgraduate students. There are widely held assumptions that many overseas students rely on reproducing information and deference to, rather than argument with authorities. At postgraduate level this would clearly pose a problem as engagement with research arguments and debates is an essential part of the level of this work. Looking at overseas postgraduate students Liz Todd (Todd, 1996) considers cultural differences, with regards to approaches to study and expectations by students, of what their work might comprise. She notes that:

"Students often come from an environment where they are not allowed to criticise teachers, raise questions that could embarrass them or even to correct them if they make a mistake. It is therefore not surprising that they find it hard to put forward their own ideas. However, in the UK postgraduate students are required to demonstrate that they appreciate that other findings are not to be simply accepted and reproduced, and to show that they understand how knowledge in a certain discipline is constructed." (Todd, 1996)

At Anglia Polytechnic University, in common with many other UK and Australian universities, we have an increase in the numbers of international students including

postgraduates studying with us on site, and increasingly at a distance for at least part of their time. The existence of these students has prompted us to develop research into their learning and into ways in which developmental programmes, tertiary literacy support and supervisory relationships can empower them and enable their learning. (Wisker, 2000; Wisker, Robinson and Trafford, 2003 forthcoming; Waller, Griffiths, Illes, Wisker, 2001)

There are many common sense reasons for arguing, and there is also emerging empirical evidence, that at least some aspects of students' conceptions of learning may be embedded in cultural (or even religious) beliefs and practices. (Meyer and Kiley 1998:8) See also Biggs (1993), Hughes and Wisker (1998).

Several studies (Landbeck and Mugler, 1994; Bloor and Bloor, 1991; Todd, 1996) suggest that while international students are aware of the different kinds of learning activities they will be involved in and different learning demands to be made of them in this new learning environment that, nonetheless, lack of prior experience of tutor-student relationships and work in small groups, for example, could hamper their learning.

Harris (1995) notes, "it is probably that the experience of being an overseas student itself encourages a cautious serialist approach to learning". This approach might manifest itself in the desire for very clear guidelines, very straightforward research questions and methods. And sometimes this could lead to accumulative approaches over meaning oriented approaches.

Cultural difference might affect reasons for study, and expected outcomes - which need to be negotiated realistically - must be established. Approaches to study - the need to synthesise, analyse and debate with authorities - must be problematised as key issues leading into research. Access to important learning resources might be adversely affected by language abilities - are any texts

available in translation? Can students be gently eased in to the ways in which we use libraries, journals, books and integrate them into our own original work? In supervision or discussion in seminars, students need time to translate the complex ideas presented, and to learn the necessary discipline related discourses so that they can speak and write in the knowledge that they are doing their thought processes justice rather than being hampered by working in a new language area. Sound learning practices or study skills, skills of analysis, reflection, contribution to dialogue with experts, need to be made explicit early on, encouraged and reinforced. Culturally more reticent students need to be involved even if it takes a while for them to start to join the discussion - so that they have the benefit of airing ideas in exploratory talk.

Ravi is still with us. The continuing induction, student mentoring and the tertiary literacy and English support established at APU seems to be helping him hang on in there. He feels he knows more people now, and that we care about his success as a learner. He has also handed in that first assignment.

Thanks to Sigrid Fisher, architect of the continuing induction, the student helper/mentors, Maidi Brown, Director of the International Office, Sylvia Griffiths, Su Wu and Emma Creighton for tertiary literacy support, Gill Robinson, Vernon Trafford, Mark Warnes (retention research) and Kathryn Wicks who all work with our international, Israeli PhD cohorts.

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Linking Teaching and Research Through Research-Based Learning

Paul Blackmore and Glynis Cousin, FSEDA

I would urge the URSS to continue ... it is a visionary opportunity for undergraduates to be involved in Warwick's top-rated research culture.

Each year the University of Warwick supports ten second-year undergraduate students with bursaries to work with academic colleagues on 'live' research projects under an Undergraduate Research Scholarship Scheme (URSS). The Scheme is part of the University's commitment to strengthen its links between teaching and research, and was one of the products of a detailed series of interviews conducted with established academic staff across the University and subsequent development work (Blackmore and Fraser, 2003). The Scheme is at present funded by the institutional learning and teaching strategy. The comment above, from a participating student in a humanities department, is typical of many positive responses to the experience.

This kind of scheme is well developed in North American universities although, to our knowledge, it appears to have been taken up in the UK only at Warwick and at Imperial College, London. In reporting on the usefulness of the Scheme, we want to suggest that its adoption would be fruitful across the university sector.

Our article draws on evaluative data from nine students (representing humanities, social science and science subjects) participating in the first year of the University of Warwick's URSS Scheme. Briefly, the students were funded to conduct research with academic colleagues either full-time during their vacation or part-time during term (limited to 8 hours a week). They were required to provide a detailed research project plan, a research diary and a final research report, as well as evaluative comments on their experience of the Scheme. Students were also strongly encouraged to sign up for a specially tailored Open College-accredited Warwick Skills Certificate, offered by the University's Centre for Lifelong Learning, so that they could emerge from the Scheme with an award which appears on their degree transcript.

Our data analysis points to four themes, namely:

1. Learning within a community of practice
2. Learning through knowledge production
3. Specific and generic skills acquisition
4. Enhancing student achievement and widening participation

We do not have space to elaborate fully on these themes but will address them briefly using the words of the students themselves. Our aim is to give the reader a taste of the enhanced learning opportunities the scheme provides for the student bursary holders.

1. Students as peripheral participants of research communities of practice

It is common in any university (see for instance, Zarmorsky, 2001 and Blackmore and Fraser, 2003), for students to feel that they are excluded from the academic research community, particularly in their early years of undergraduate life. We have rich evidence from the students that they appreciated having access to the research community in their departments. In our view, their comments offer support for Lave and Wenger's (1999) argument that situated learning through peripheral membership of a community of practice provides a context for deep learning.

It has not just been the research itself that has been valuable but working around and with those who are very knowledgeable and qualified. Being able to discuss ideas and results with them and talk with them about the research has meant that I have learnt a great deal from just working with them. (Science student)

Ultimately, it is the scheme's ability to provide undergraduates with the possibility of working closely with a professional academic that has been rewarding for me. Not only did it give a real insight into contemporary academic research but it also provided me with access to a high level of expertise in areas that interest me, which I believe to have been the greatest benefit to me in my involvement with this scheme. (Humanities student)

It was a great experience for me to work in a real research environment. (Social Science student)

People in the centre were Doctor, Reader and even Professor, people who have more experience and knowledge than I do and really, I have learned a lot from the centre during the 6 weeks. I do feel a sense of achievement and self-fulfilment from having done this small project. I think this experience will be a great advantage for my future career. (Social Science student)

These and other comments we have received offer illustration of Lave and Wenger's (1999) view that much of our learning is rooted in the experiential and the social. We learn by doing but also by being there, in the first instance, as a kind of apprentice who can work 'around and with those who are very knowledgeable and qualified', as one student puts it. While we accept that our Scheme is extra-curricular and limited to a handful of students, their testimonies about the benefits of being drawn more closely into the research culture of their departments provide important messages about undergraduate curriculum design, as we next discuss.

2. Students as knowledge producers

It can be argued that conceptions of teaching and learning are implicitly tied in with conceptions of research and the epistemological positions underpinning them (Brew, 2001). If, for instance, research is seen as a product, rather like something that falls off an assembly line at the end of a research cycle, then a transmission model of teaching and learning is well aligned to this. In this conception, there is a perceived separation between the knowledge produced and the knower, deriving from the view that the former can be objectively generated. In this conception, the researcher remains unchanged throughout the research cycle. Extended to the teaching sphere, this research framework positions teachers as knowledge transmitters primarily and the students as knowledge reproducers, with the lecture as an ideal medium for communicating and receiving knowledge. If, on the other hand, we see research activity as personally transformative in ways suggested by our students and following Brew (2001), we will need to accommodate more research-like activities in the undergraduate curriculum.

Given that knowledge is increasingly seen as an outcome of negotiation and interpretation in a social context of uncertainty (e.g. Gibbons et al, 1994), the stance of the teacher needs to be more one of facilitating inquiry with students wherever the curriculum permits. Certainly, it is clear from students' comments that they learnt much by getting closer to the culture of inquiry of their subject and greatly appreciated playing a role in knowledge production:

What I most liked about the project was being able to investigate my own ideas to solves problems arising in the project. (Science)

Overall I would say that the modelling work was the most enjoyable. This was because any ideas about the experiment could be tested through alteration of the models and so directly showing whether the ideas were feasible or not. Perhaps this was most enjoyable as I did help contribute to alteration of a model that worked significantly better than the model that was being previously used. (Science)

The subjects we have researched have considerably affected and informed my own critical interests which was one of my main hopes from the outset of the project; this will undoubtedly profoundly influence any future work interests. (Humanities student)

The project also highlighted the exciting possibilities in-depth study can produce in the emerging fields our research involved. (Humanities)

This project has given me a taste of what proper research entails and how it operates. (Science)

I think that the scheme has given me an amazing opportunity to get an inside look into the nature of researching in psychology and get involved in it. I have learned a massive amount during this project and think that it has been very worthwhile. (Science)

I've gained an unbelievably rich insight into a fascinating subject and culture and my work will help future research. (Humanities)

In an evaluation of a similar scheme in the US, Baxter Magolda (1999) contrasted the epistemological development of students on this scheme with another cohort of students. Following Perry's analysis of the intellectual and moral development of undergraduates, her conclusions were that research-based learning opportunities allowed immature views of knowledge as predictable and certain to be replaced by a more nuanced and open understanding of how it is constructed and exchanged. We think that our students' comments point to similar findings and strengthen the case generally for allowing students greater access to the research cultures of their departments. For ways of so doing, see Jenkins et al (2002).

It is probably unrealistic to turn the entire undergraduate curriculum into a research-based learning one but an added argument for its facilitation in some of the curriculum comes from the strong opportunities it offers for skills acquisition.

3. Research-based learning and skill acquisition.

In many ways, the data we have on skills acquisition is the most powerful and certainly the most detailed. In the light of the increased pressure placed on universities to address the skills and employability agenda, the comments we received point to the importance of providing students with access to forms of experiential and inquiry based learning as a means of fulfilling these needs. Indeed the first quotation strongly suggests that students may need to break from conventional learning and teaching methods in order to develop their skills:

Having always been in an education system that is very structured (according to national curriculum etc) it was refreshing to follow the path of work I found interesting rather than what I was told to do. The project gave me the

first hand experience of working as a researcher and the 'freedom' it provides. Structuring the work myself (with the help of my supervisor) has developed my time and resource management skills. (Science)

The next extract shows the students' awareness of her generic and subject specific skills development:

I have undoubtedly learnt a great deal over the past 2 months on this scholarship; the amount of reading I have done astounds me. What I have learnt can effectively be broken into 2 parts - 1 being the specific knowledge of the subject; 2 being the wider, more technical and transferable skills. As far as transferable skills go, the list does seem endless. Every single time that I would read a text, I was constantly evaluating and judging it not only for its dramatic qualities but also for its bibliographic details, with a view to creating the database. (Humanities)

The following selection of comments simply offer further illustration of the many skills students felt that they had acquired:

I have learnt how to refine searches to make them as effective as possible. I have also been introduced to the use of relevant search engines to find research papers and also how to obtain them using the inter-library loan system. It has also taught me how to write effective technical reports. With the objective of the project to produce a report suitable for submission for publication in a journal I have had to learn to structure and write in a style that I have not used before. (Humanities)

Through my attendance at numerous team meetings I have learnt how to positively exchange information in order to keep the project moving forward. I have also learnt how to effectively organise both data and literature materials. Taking part in this project has enabled me to observe how the law works in practice (Social Science)

Through these seven weeks I was able to hone my skills as an experimentalist, and I had a lot of contact with the electrical and mechanical workshops within my department. This was an area that I had not had much involvement with previously and allowed me to develop my communication skills as I presented ideas and thoughts, discussing ways to proceed and designing new approaches to problems as they arose. I think that overall the work has brought out a great sense of entrepreneurship in myself and given me insights into the trials and tribulations that come with such endeavours, but one that I believe is the way I must follow (Science)

Although our numbers are too low to offer conclusive findings, in our attempt to understand the benefits of skills acquisition from participation in the scheme in terms of final year performance, we have an interesting mixed picture, as we signal below.

4. Enhancing student learning in the undergraduate curriculum

A central purpose of the Undergraduate Student Scholarship Scheme is to deepen both the students' and the teachers' understandings of the value of research-based learning for the undergraduate curriculum. While we accept that such learning occurs routinely for finalists, our aim is to embed more research-based learning in the earlier years of undergraduate life - this is why the Scheme is targeted at second years. Here are some final comments from students on the benefits of the Scheme for their mainstream studies:

Being involved in this research ... has been extremely rewarding and enjoyable. The amount that I have learnt and the skills that I have developed during the last ten weeks will undoubtedly be immensely useful in the future, particularly for the final year of my degree. (Science)

In terms of my degree many of the skills will relate directly to my third year project and will hopefully allow me to research something that before would have been beyond my scope. (Science)

This project has been a positive learning experience for me in many ways, some of which I have already applied to the research necessary to my degree. (Humanities)

In tracking the performance of this cohort of bursary holders, we have discovered that some did very well (with two gaining firsts). Two were reported by their supervisors to have excelled in their final year research projects (indeed one received a prize) but to have received a disappointing degree classification. Is it possible that research-based learning enables some students to shine in ways that conventional examinations do not?

Research-based learning and widening participation

Research-intensive institutions face particular challenges in responding to the need for widening participation. Schemes such as URSS can play a significant part in such a response. In the United States, schemes like ours are sometimes used to raise interest in academic work among students from under-represented groups which are known to perform best through experiential learning methods. The above comments, and those we have received from supervisors about the accelerated learning they have observed in their students on the Scheme, encourage us in the view that linking teaching and research through the expansion of research-based learning opportunities will help support a variety of learners. We will be testing this view, particularly in the sciences through a funded project from the Learning and Teaching Support Network for the Physical Sciences, in which we are exploring the benefits of research-based learning in chemistry and physics in post

and pre-1992 universities. We do not think that this kind of Scheme need be unique to research-led universities or that its beneficiaries must be among the high achievers in their departments. We hope to expand on this theme in the light of findings from our cross-sector research and from further evaluative data we are generating from our current cohort of bursary holders and supervisors.

Anyone wanting to know more about the Scheme or wanting support in setting up a similar one can visit the website:

www.warwick.ac.uk/services/CAP/RBL/rss.htm

Or email: **Glynis.Cousin@warwick.ac.uk**

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Kogan Page Becomes RoutledgeFalmer

In the summer, the Kogan Page education list was acquired by Taylor & Francis, and has been incorporated into its RoutledgeFalmer education imprint - one of the 14 imprints in the Taylor & Francis group. RoutledgeFalmer publishes in the areas of higher education, further education, schools, early years and SEN.

As a result of this change, the SEDA series for Educational and Staff Developers is now to be published by RoutledgeFalmer. The editorial team from Kogan Page - Philip Mudd and Stephen Jones - have moved across, and all SEDA's publishing agreements and contractual arrangements remain in place. Stephen Jones is responsible for the higher education, further education and online learning list, so will be the main contact for those writing in the SEDA series. After a brief pause in deliveries while stocks were moved between warehouses around the world, sales have now resumed, and a new booklet advertising all RoutledgeFalmer books relevant to staff and educational development and to general HE teaching has appeared. You can download this from the 'publications' pages of the SEDA website (www.seda.ac.uk), and it is particularly relevant for participants on PG Cert courses. Taylor & Francis is already the publisher of Innovations in Education and Teaching International - SEDA's refereed journal, edited by Gina Wisker and Philip Barker.

If you are contemplating writing something for publication through either SEDA or RoutledgeFalmer, you might be interested in the downloadable guides. On SEDA's 'publications' pages we have a template for proposals for SEDA Papers and SEDA Specials, and full 'guidelines for authors'. On the RoutledgeFalmer website (<http://www.routledgefalmer.com/>) you can find 'proposals' and 'instructions for authors'. It is always best to discuss your ideas before investing in too much work, so please make contact either with me or with Stephen Jones at RoutledgeFalmer (stephen.jones@tandf.co.uk).

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VLE's - Don't Panic!

Stephen Bostock, FSEDA

(A bibliography and links to web references are provided in the online version of this article on the SEDA web site.)

For 20 years or more forward-looking businesses have been thinking strategically about integrating their information systems. HE is far behind in this endeavour, maybe because our 'product' (learning) and our processes (teaching) are intangible and complex. Anyway, the attempt at integration is now called the Managed Learning Environment. The sharp end of this system, experienced by students, is the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), an area now dominated by two commercial products from the US: WebCT and Blackboard. But they are not the magic bullet for e-learning, if we are aiming for learning rather than just 'e'.

The first of the 22 Briefing Papers on VLEs from JISC states that "the complete VLE needs to deliver" the following 5 functions.

1. Support for on-line learning, including access to learning resources, assessment and guidance. The learning resources may be self-developed, or professionally authored and purchased materials that can be imported and made available for use by learners.

Tutors can upload their own files into a VLE, much as they would place them on a traditional web site, and their institution might acquire further resources commercially. One problem is 'locking in' these resources to a particular VLE, which might go bust! If all VLEs adhered to interoperability standards this would allow transfer to other systems, but a safer approach is to keep master copies elsewhere. The need to re-use, repackage or re-brand content is being addressed technically by the 'learning objects' project. However, the difficult problem is not technical but one of educational practice; integrating resources is part of curriculum design.

2. Controlled access to curriculum that has been mapped to elements (or "chunks") that can be separately assessed and recorded

VLEs allow teachers to control access to specific resources depending on individual student activity and performance in online tests. But how many HE teachers really want to do this? Is it compatible with encouraging independent thinking and self-management of learning? Would this 'chunking' of a curriculum prevent learning outcomes involving synthesis, for example?

3. Communication between the learner, the tutor and other learning support specialists to provide direct support and feedback for learners, as well as peer-group communications that build a sense of group identity and community of interest

Online text 'discussions', synchronous or asynchronous, has been used for decades. The discussion boards in VLEs tend to be simple, which may be an advantage or a disadvantage.

4. Tracking student activity and achievement against these elements using simple processes for course administration and student tracking that make it possible for tutors to define and set up a course with accompanying materials and activities to direct, guide and monitor learner progress

The need for automating the tracking of students increases when personal contact diminishes. VLEs will tell you when students have arrived (online) and what they have done there. Will teachers use this tracking information? Will students feel oppressed by the detailed monitoring of their activity?

5. Links to other administrative systems, both in-house and externally. It is clearly efficient to register students in a VLE course from central records

but, for some, ensuring those records are complete before the course starts - so that staff know who they are teaching - is more a hope than reality. Also, before the results of summative testing in a VLE are returned to central records they must be subject to the judgement of assessors in examination boards.

Much of what VLEs do is available elsewhere as individual software tools, such as objective testing and discussion boards. So most of the research and debate about the appropriate uses of technology in learning and teaching is relevant to VLEs. What is novel about them is their integration with other MLE systems and their integration of tools within a single web interface, for teacher and students. Integration with other systems should bring efficiencies and save administration for teachers. Integration of tools within an interface is the 'Swiss Army Knife' effect - you never know when you need to pick stones out of horses' hooves so the pocket knife includes it just in case. A VLE provides more tools than most teachers need, and with the convenience of a common user interface.

However, a VLE is not pedagogically neutral in the teaching-learning activities it supports. Although teachers can develop the resources, discussions, quizzes, etc. in a VLE with relative ease, it does not absolve them from the responsibility of designing the teaching-learning activities. As staff and educational developers we should keep in mind the ultimate goal - student learning - as we grapple with the mechanics and the strategic implications of VLEs.

With thanks to James Wisdom, Paul Bailey and Karen Fill.

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