

# EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

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



Issue 6.2

May 2005 ISSN 1469-3267

£6 Cover price (UK only)

## Contents

- 1 **Developing a Dissemination Strategy**  
Martyn Stewart & Sue Thompson
- 6 **Editorial: e-learning and reflective judgement**  
Stephen Bostock FSEDA
- 6 **Researching Foundation Degrees: turning research into practice**  
Peter Beaney
- 11 **The right to resist** David Storey
- 12 **The Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework**  
Bob Matthew
- 15 **Professional Dialogue: an innovative inclusion in staff development**  
Anne Stevenson
- 17 **A systematic approach for staff and educational developers who would like evidence to inform their practice**  
Peter Kahn FSEDA and Randal Macdonald FSEDA
- 21 **Interview with Rob Ward, Director of the Centre for Recording Achievement**  
Steve Outram
- 23 **A Personal Reflection: on standards, frameworks and the individual**  
Andrew Honeybone
- 25 **Professional Standards - models and issues** Mike Tribe FIBiol
- 27 **Teaching and Research: The Tables Turned**  
Helen Sword

### SEDA Ltd

Selly Wick House  
59-61 Selly Wick Road, Selly Park,  
Birmingham B29 7JE  
Tel 0121 415 6801  
Fax 0121 415 6802  
E-mail [office@seda.ac.uk](mailto:office@seda.ac.uk)

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

[www.seda.ac.uk](http://www.seda.ac.uk)

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

## Developing a Dissemination Strategy

Martyn Stewart & Sue Thompson, Liverpool John Moores University

Dissemination is writ large in our Learning Development Unit's 'mission statement'. We use a wide range of strategies and there is a high volume of activity and output. We know we are not unusual in this. It would be hard to find an educational development unit that does not place a high value on dissemination as part of its remit. Why do we do this? What difference does it make?

In outlining the evolution of our dissemination strategy, this article describes how we have attempted to use dissemination as a device for raising the profile of learning and teaching within the University by focusing on strategies for engagement that go beyond the 'usual suspects', at all levels within the institution. The article also highlights the strategies we have employed to determine impact and the challenges we still face in 'reaching all parts' and in demonstrating that our approaches are making a difference.

### Context

A recommendation from the QAA institutional audit of Liverpool John Moores University in 1999 identified dissemination of good practice as an area for improvement. What follows is the story of how an integrated model of dissemination for engaging staff in learning and teaching initiatives and activity has subsequently been developed.

Following the 1999 QAA audit, a post was created within the newly established Learning Development Unit to develop a strategy for dissemination. From the outset, it was recognised that a key issue would be not just one of compiling a newsletter or putting on a conference but, at a more psychological level, how might we engage staff? How do we reach beyond 'the usual suspects', particularly in a prevailing culture where teaching activities are still valued less than research?

### Informing dissemination: the practitioner's viewpoint

Dissemination has been examined in terms of dissemination for awareness, for knowledge/understanding and for action/use (Fincher, 2000; Gravestock, 2002; King, 2003). From the early stages we recognised that for dissemination to be effective, we had to create demand for the product. Our particular concern was at an elementary level, before we could even expect awareness-raising, never mind the subsequent impact on student learning, how would we first engage people?

To help answer this demanding question an informal, small scale enquiry was conducted in which 11 academic staff, in most cases Teaching & Learning Co-ordinators within academic Schools, were interviewed in depth to clarify the key barriers to engaging colleagues in educational development. The interviews were lengthy and tried to get to the root of the problems and explore a range of strategies that might work. A number of key issues (and possible solutions) kept arising:

## Editorial Committee

### Graham Alsop

Kingston University

### Dr Stephen Bostock FSEDA

Keele University

### Anthony Brand

University of Hertfordshire

### Helen Gale

University of Wolverhampton

### Dr Ray Land FSEDA

Coventry University

### Mike Laycock

University of East London

### Ranald Macdonald FSEDA

Sheffield Hallam University

### Steve Outram

The Higher Education Academy

### Rachel Segal

The Higher Education Academy

### Lorraine Stefani FSEDA

Auckland University, NZ

### James Wisdom

Higher Education Consultant

## 2005 (Vol.6)

### Annual Subscription Rates

Individual subscriptions are £24 sterling per year (4 issues) within the UK. Overseas subscribers should add £5 sterling postage and packing for delivery within the EU or £8 sterling for the rest of the world.

Bulk copies can also be purchased in packs of 10 @ £200 sterling per pack.

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

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

### Recognising different learning preferences

If we were to be serious in reaching a wider audience it was suggested that we would need to recognise that not all staff liked attending staff development workshops or discussing issues. Some would prefer what have been described as 'passive' forms of dissemination, which none the less expects an audience, such as reading articles and working on their own (Fincher, 2000).

### Lack of recognition and sense of a learning and teaching 'environment'

It was felt that discipline research was highly valued and there existed an environment for promoting, valuing and developing research - seminars, workshops, bulletins, with key outputs promoted across the university via the campus-wide intranet. In contrast there was a sense that there was no equivalent 'learning and teaching environment'. This seemed to be more than a need for a community of practice but for a broader environment in which educational innovations could be promoted - not just networking forums and workshops but a prominent, public and permanent face for teaching and learning within the institution.

### Ownership of dissemination

It was argued that any dissemination 'vehicles' produced would likely be more effective if seen to be practitioner-centred rather than educational developer-led.

### Language and overload of information

Constant reference was made to the use of 'jargon' and acronyms throughout educational literature. If we were serious in engaging more people we would need to convey ideas and information in clear, pragmatic and understandable formats. Finding appropriate answers was sometimes so difficult many staff simply gave up.

### Literature too turgid and negative

One interviewee remarked, with brutal honesty, that were we to produce literature, one of the main difficulties would be "in getting your average academic to open it past the front cover rather than it heading straight for the bin!" She continued that the more enjoyable aspects of teaching are seldom seen in the literature, "some humour wouldn't go amiss".

### Designing a dissemination strategy: making the ground fertile

This study was critical in defining our conception of what was meant by dissemination. Exploring the issues in more detail had revealed that what was needed was not just simply the production of a number of dissemination vehicles to raise awareness of good practice and news, but the creation of an environment or platforms from which staff could engage with educational developmental activity. In effect, it meant making the ground fertile to allow successful dissemination.

We use the term 'design' throughout this article because we view the resultant dissemination model as a system of devices, united by a common set of principles learnt from the investigation (see Box 1).

**Box 1:** Guiding principles learned from the initial study used to inform design of the various dissemination vehicles:

- To ask ourselves throughout, "Why would staff want to read this?"
- To promote innovation and effective practice through networking
- To ensure a sense of ownership by academic and support staff
- To accommodate different preferences for professional development
- To keep the language clear: for example introducing theory using metaphors &/or illustrative examples

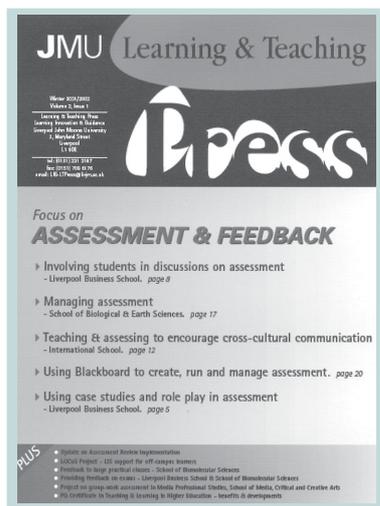
As has been recognised elsewhere (e.g. Fincher, 2000; Gravestock, 2002, King, 2003) we realised that there are complex variables here and that dissemination needed to be multifaceted: focussed on the end-user, targeted at different levels and addressing different goals.

By collaborating with academic staff in discussions on dissemination our intention had been to predict where any failures in communication might occur and we subsequently viewed this almost as an issue of 'selling' teaching and learning within the institution: to raise its status within the consciousness by putting a 'face' on teaching and learning, to showcase good practice, to engage people in a variety of different ways that suited different ways of working and to sustain momentum. As a result, the subsequent vehicles for dissemination have been designed and adapted over the past 4 years with these specific functions in mind, and to work together, collectively, as a system.

The key dissemination vehicles are described briefly here but a better sense can be gained by viewing them directly via the links to our website: <http://cwis.livjm.ac.uk/lid/ltweb/>

### Magazine - showcasing Learning & Teaching at JMU

A magazine was produced bi-annually to showcase teaching and learning. Copies can be downloaded from the website above. Looking through these you will see how we have tried to bear in mind the principles outlined in Box 1.



Articles from academic staff to ensure a sense of ownership by the end-user dominate content: this in itself makes the language style and content empathetic to the readership. In initially preparing this we tried to learn from strategies used in popular magazines, and thus this has a magazine feel to it. We had debated whether a more scholarly research journal would be more appropriate, but our aim was to engage staff through a more informal feel - there are already hundreds of scholarly educational journals.

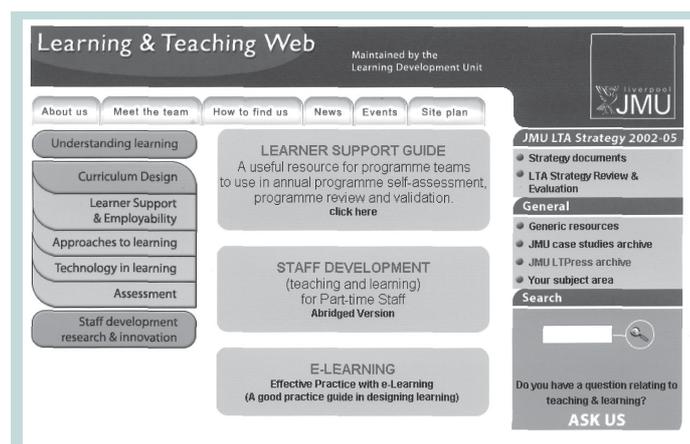
The magazine is printed and distributed to pigeonholes of all staff that teach and support learning to ensure the widest reach. In the words of one of the study interviewees "even if there was nothing inside, the fact that a magazine is landing on people's desks with 'Teaching and Learning' on the cover is making a big statement". It could easily have been disseminated only in electronic format but how many people, realistically, will download and read an electronic magazine?. This could be read on the train on the way home.

As well as putting a 'face' to Teaching & Learning, a key function of the magazine is to provide a platform for first-time writing or publication. In the 5 issues published to date, 74 members of staff have contributed, either by authoring articles (mostly case-studies) or being interviewed. Of the 74 contributors, 60 are academic staff and of these 35 had never previously had education-related work published.

### Website: navigating the Learning and Teaching landscape

<http://cwis.livjm.ac.uk/lid/ltweb/>

This is the medium that we have in place for those staff who prefer to engage in a more passive manner and for what Fincher (2000) describes as "putting information 'in my path', where I might be expected to look for it." As a result it is more than just an archive database, but is, rather, a portal to introduce staff to the 'landscape' of learning & teaching and aid navigation through this. With over 2000 pages it contains a range of guides, articles and resources and links to external resources, but also tools to help staff explore more scholarly resources, with themed bibliographies and a comprehensive guide to education journals.



### Conference, forums and a network database: building a community of practice

To facilitate networking we host a two day annual Learning and Teaching conference and a range of themed forums. Since a primary objective of our dissemination strategy is to engage as many staff as possible, in its first 3 years we have kept the conference quite open, rather than themed which would likely lead to a more selective audience.

More recently, and based on feedback received, we have created a network database, drawing together details of educational development and research projects and staff interests across the university to assist collaboration and help staff identify whether a particular idea has been developed previously. See: <http://cwis.livjm.ac.uk/lid/ltweb/LTNetwork/default.htm>

### E-newsletters for sustaining momentum

As the magazine, conference, forums and awards are occasional, and the online resources require the user to actively access it, it was recognised that a further active

device was needed to provide more frequent updates. We therefore introduced short, electronic Learning and Teaching Newsletters tailored to each of the University's six Faculties. Again we try to be conscious of what the reader wants here, so these are designed to be scanned through quickly and to focus on news that is likely to be directly useful, such as funding opportunities or practical resources.

### **Developmental and research project awards: to encourage active development and to recognise and reward effective practice**

In 2001 we introduced a learning and teaching awards scheme as a strategic initiative to recognise and promote effective learning, teaching and assessment practice. The awards are in four categories: Curriculum Innovation, Curriculum Development, Teaching-related Research and Teaching Fellowships for individual teaching excellence. The award criteria are closely matched to the goals of the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy and place a strong emphasis on dissemination. Our HEFCE Teaching Quality Enhancement Funding has supported the awards and since the scheme was introduced the awards have involved staff from every Faculty and include academic, learner support, administrative staff and postgraduate students. In total approximately £110,000 of TQE funding has supported 70 awards.

Impact studies conducted by Learning Development have identified strong evidence of dissemination of outcomes and wider impact across and beyond the University. Many award holders commented on the positive impact that the awards have had in recognition of their work and in raising the profile of learning and teaching. In almost all cases award holders were able to cite examples of how their work has been disseminated more widely through, for example,

- the L&T Press
- presentations at the annual L&T conference
- contributing information/resources on the website, presentation/workshops for colleagues at programme, school and faculty staff development 'away days' and lunch time seminars
- involvement in cross-university working groups, forums and projects
- presentations at national and international conferences on learning and teaching, subject conferences and conferences of professional associations.

Increasingly, award holders are able to cite examples of how the outcomes of their awards have led to curriculum enhancement for themselves, their colleagues and their students

*'it has been interesting to get other colleagues more involved in pedagogic research too, it is becoming more acceptable when they see the rigour of it being carried out...we are currently taking the work into other Schools of the Faculty so the ripples are spreading.'*

Some award holders were able to give examples of how

their award has been instrumental in leading to other developments:

*'having received an award for the virtual feedback, I then applied for supplementary funding from the LTSN Subject Centre and was successful. I feel this would have been more difficult if we hadn't already received recognition from the University.'*

In reflecting on the positive impact of the awards scheme we believe that a critical success factor has been that the awards are rooted in disciplinary practice, in other words, the vector is always the practitioner and making it work means making it fit (Fincher, 2000).

### **Impact and critical success factors**

Reflecting back over the past 4 years we see a number of key improvements.

#### **Increased voluntary engagement of the academic community**

In 2001 when we hosted our first conference there were 30 presenters and 78 delegates. In 2004 we had 55 presenters and 192 delegates. Membership of the various forums is increasing with over 80 staff listed in both the Learning Technologies and Pedagogic Research forums. The website in particular has received good feedback as a first source of information, the pages of which receive an average of 600 hits per month, the majority of which are from JMU staff.

#### **Mainstreaming of Teaching & Learning**

We are also seeing that Teaching & Learning is becoming established more firmly on the 'agenda' within the institution.

The University's Research & Graduate School in 2004 for the first time explicitly announced funding to support pedagogic research projects from the University Research Fund. Given the different perceived status between research and teaching, such support would have been unlikely a few years ago.

The University's Faculty of Education and Community Studies has recently established a Centre for Educational Research & Evaluation (CERE), with membership open to staff from across JMU. This has enormous potential for developing scholarship in teaching and learning. In setting up CERE the Faculty liaised closely with Learning Development and has articulated a deliberate strategy of locking into the capacity building work on promoting the scholarship of teaching that the Learning Development unit has engaged in.

Most recently Learning Development has found that working closely with a 5\* research department on a HEFCE Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching bid provides us with an indication that our strategies for engagement are 'reaching more parts.' Part of the evidence base within the bid's claim for excellence was the citing of a wide range of engagement of departmental

staff over the last 4/5 years with the initiatives and activities described in this article.

In this article we have focused on strategies for engagement with academic staff and how we have worked 'from the middle out' with the 'bottom up'. Simultaneously, however, we have also been mindful of the strategic importance of working from 'the middle out' with the 'top down'. Much of what we have been engaged in has a change management focus, what Trowler, Saunders and Knight (2003) describe as 'changing thinking, changing practice'. In deploying strategies for engagement we have been cognisant of the pivotal role that senior managers at all levels in the institution play in the enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment. This has added another dimension to our dissemination strategy, that of influencing and contributing to the shaping of the institutional learning and teaching policy and strategy. This is probably a topic for another article in itself, but in this context we would stress how we have used dissemination as a strategy for communication with senior managers - VC, PVCs, Deans, School and Service Directors. One small example of this is that every time a copy of the Learning and Teaching Press is produced we send a personal copy with a letter to every member of the University's Management Group. We are fully aware that this does not mean they read it, but it does mean that the profile of Learning and Teaching, and that of the Learning Development unit, is raised and we do know that the Press is used as evidence for external audiences of what the University is doing.

### Do we know it works?

Evaluating the impact of our strategy is complex. It is relatively straightforward to track the range of activity and feedback on that. As Fincher (2002) notes, it is not so easy to track examples of dissemination of use because, by definition, the end users do not owe a debt to the originators.

What we can say is that our dissemination model has been designed through discussion with academic staff and purposefully tuned to maximise engagement and raise the profile of teaching and learning. We frequently monitor our activities and feedback collected is very positive. Importantly, we are making direct contacts with new colleagues who are choosing to engage, rather than having to, which can only be a good thing!

Seeing dissemination in its broadest definition as sowing seeds for change, we have placed particular emphasis on strategies for engaging people in educational development. The more staff that are actively engaged in projects; reading; writing; presenting at, or attending events; participating in forums; or simply browsing through e-newsletters, magazines or websites; the greater the chance of educational development being maintained in people's consciousness, and new ideas being considered and even adopted, to impact on students' learning.

As a consequence our approach has been to 'sell' teaching and learning and to tune our dissemination strategy to *maximise the likelihood* of engagement, focusing on the end-user and learning from collaboration with our colleagues in academic Schools.

### References

- Fincher, S. (2000) From transfer to transformation: towards a framework for successful dissemination of engineering education, paper presented at the 30<sup>th</sup> ASEE/IEEE *Frontiers in Education Conference*, 18-21 October 2000, Kansas City, [Online] <http://fie.engr.pitt.edu/fie2000/papers/1269.pdf> (accessed 17th January 2005)
- Gravestock, P. (2002) Making an impact through dissemination, in *Managing Educational Development Projects: Effective Management for Maximum Impact*, ed C Baume, P Martin and M Yorke, Kogan Page London
- King, H. (2000) Disseminating educational developments in, *A Guide to Staff and Educational Development*, ed P Kahn and D Baume, Kogan Page, London.
- Trowler, P, Saunders, M and Knight, P (2003) *Changing Thinking, Changing Practices: a guide to change for Heads of Department, Programme Leaders and other change agents in Higher Education*, LTSN Generic Centre, York And [Online] <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/921.htm> (accessed 17th January 2005).

**Martyn Stewart** works in the Learning Development Unit at Liverpool John Moores University as Learning Development Officer for Dissemination and Research.

**Sue Thompson** is Director of Learning Development at Liverpool John Moores University.

Now Available

## Employability: a rationale and examples of practice

**SEDA/ESECT Special 18  
Price £10**

**ISBN: 1-902435-30-3**

For further information on this and other publications, please contact the SEDA Office: [office@seda.ac.uk](mailto:office@seda.ac.uk) or visit the SEDA website: [www.seda.ac.uk](http://www.seda.ac.uk)

# Editorial

Having performed my editorial duties to bring this issue to press, I now claim the prize of airing my prejudices in public. As I am over 50, I admit to being a Grumpy Old Man, and my complaint is the word e-learning. Having used computers to support learning for some 25 years, I have become used to the regular changing of abbreviations for the various applications of computers to learning and teaching: CAL, CBT, TBT, CBA, CAA, C&IT, ICT, ITS, CMC - alphabet soup of *computer, information, technology*, and so on. The regular invention of terms partly reflects real advances in technology and its applications, but mostly reflects the predilection of authors to invent their own terms. A minor irritation.

However, there is something about the current term of fashion, e-learning, that grates. It is borrowed from e-commerce: in the early 1990s businesses linked their information systems to pass electronic "documents" between them rather than paper ones - invoices, orders, cheques and so on. That was business-to-business e-commerce. Then, as the availability of the World Wide Web grew, so did business-to-customer e-commerce so that, merely ten years later, we think nothing of ordering books, batteries or holidays "online". Accompanied by business process re-engineering and restructuring, e-commerce was a radical shift that deserved a new term.

E-learning implies that educational institutions could make

a similar leap in efficiency. Obviously, there are business aspects of large educational institutions that can benefit from e-commerce. There are also, possibly, specialist functions that would constitute e-education (and I don't mean buying an honours degree online). However, that is not what e-learning implies, which is that student learning processes can be computerized. They can't. Education as personal development is not a commodity, not just a series of online transactions. Like social work and hair-dressing, say, education is a personal service. Computerized information systems can usefully support social work, hairdressing, and educational enterprises, but terms such as e-social-work or e-hairdressing have no obvious meaning. Why should we use e-learning when much of the quality of the student learning experience depends on the personal contact between students and teachers, whether face-to-face or electronically. By consenting to use e-learning uncritically we are drawn into the assumption that education is a commodity whose production can be automated, computerized, made electronic.

We will have to continue to use e-learning, of course, whilst our paymasters do so, but I hope the term now also grates on you :-)

**Stephen Bostock** FSEDA,  
Advisor for Technology and Learning, Keele University.

## Researching Foundation Degrees: turning research into practice

**Dr Peter Beaney**, Foundation Degree Forward

### Some Preliminary Thoughts

The government has made a major investment in the development of Foundation degrees (Fds). The White Paper on Higher Education of January 2003 (*The Future of Higher Education*) established Fds as the predominant form of expansion in HE for the foreseeable future. There has, therefore, been a significant investment in supporting the development of Fds in order to establish them as a sustainable form of HE provision. The number of programmes and students undertaking Fds is rapidly increasing and there is a growing level of infrastructural activity - through, for example, the establishment of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) - which is indicative of the government's commitment to ensuring that

education is attuned to the needs of the economy.

### Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)

*"SSCs are independent, strategic UK wide organisations. They have responsibility for skills and workforce development of all those employed in their sectors - from professional to trade, administrative, support and other ancillary workers - and all sizes of employer - from large firms to micro-businesses and the self employed."*

**Source:** [http://www.fdf.ac.uk/sector\\_skills/sector\\_skills.php](http://www.fdf.ac.uk/sector_skills/sector_skills.php)

An equivalent amount of attention, however, has not been given to the generic and applied educational

research which would enable us to evaluate the success of Fds with any certainty. The educational press is full of speculation regarding Fds and myths and scare stories abound in the absence of informed opinion. This is a puzzling situation given the novelty and innovative nature of Fds. Even a cursory review of academic educational research journals and conferences, for example, reveals that there is very little reported research on Fds; there have not been, for example, more than a handful of articles in refereed journals since Fds were first established. This does not mean, of course, that research concerning Fds is not taking place but rather that it is not being undertaken within the formal academic research community. It is instead being

carried out by practitioners, intermediary organisations and consultants who are generally closely involved in some way with the development and implementation of Fds themselves.

This lack of attention by the academic research community and others may be because Fds are a relatively recent phenomenon or because research into Fds has not been allocated a specific funding stream but it may also be because of a deeper rooted suspicion of Fds within the HE community where the majority of institutionally based educational research is located. The entrenched divide between vocationally and academically orientated learning, which has been such a strong focus of concern in recent years, extends to research as well as to educational provision. Academically-based educational research has, however, been heavily criticised from within government and elsewhere in recent years for its lack of relevance to policy making and educational practice. This has provoked a sustained debate regarding the value of educational research which has extended to specific issues such as the best means of achieving a 'fit' between research, policy and practice, on the one hand, and the links between research, scholarship, and professional development, on the other. Whilst some of this debate is reductive and polarised there clearly are reasons why we should expect research to assist in the formation of good policy and practice even if this is a complex and difficult connection to make.

None of this would perhaps be of more than narrow intellectual interest in terms of Fds if it were not for the fact that we currently know very little - except from the sources noted above - about how the development of Fds is proceeding. Any close examination of the field soon reveals that there are critical areas of policy application, institutional development, student background, and pedagogic practice about which there is very little which is reliably known. Even at the level of raw data there is little detailed data available given the difficulties of collecting and aggregating data for a form of provision which transcends

institutional boundaries. The qualitative research picture is richer but still very fragmented and diverse in nature because of the limited amount of institutional coordination and formal support for Fd research. Unless, therefore, there is a significant effort over the next few years to support and pull together both quantitative and qualitative research regarding Fds the experience of a major experiment in educational re-engineering will be lost. Not only this but the opportunity to re-examine and refocus educational research activity around new and emerging forms of educational practice will also be lost.

### The Role of Research

This clearly raises fundamental questions about the nature and role of research and its links with educational policy and practice. It might be argued that research, in the formal sense, has little to contribute to the development of Fds. Many in government, civil society and sectors of education itself are sceptical about the value of 'research' given that, for them, it is a disengaged and potentially elitist activity. For both internal and external reasons social science based research (which encompasses much education research) has tended to become increasingly self enclosed and inward looking, although there are significant exceptions to this general tendency (see below). More importantly perhaps there is a counterbalancing tendency which comes, on the one hand, from the movement for evidence-based practice and, on the other, from the development of action research in education which is changing the way we think about and engage in research in areas of professional 'practice' such as education, health and social work. Neither of these approaches is without their problems (see, for example, Hammersley 2001 on evidence-based practice) and there are real questions to engage with concerning who sets and directs research agendas but nevertheless these new approaches do at least signal a long overdue re-evaluation of the role and value of educational research in relation to critical areas of policy and practice.

It is the contention of this article that Fds, because they provide a

challenge to accepted forms of provision, confront some of these issues in a particularly acute form. Whilst there is no intention here to undervalue educational research or to support crude conceptions of 'relevance' and 'evidence' there are, as noted above, arguments which can be made to advance the idea that research can make a more direct contribution to policy and practice. At the same time, at a more general level it is questionable whether the formal educational research community has come to terms with the way in which educational provision has shifted towards new forms of open, distance, adult, community, vocational and work based learning (WBL) (Silver, 1999). The issue is not simply one of academic independence - which it tends to be within universities - but also of social justice since these new forms of learning, and Fds in particular, are explicitly aimed at developing forms of provision which will facilitate the inclusion of groups which would not otherwise *be included*. This puts them in distinct opposition to the forms of formal educational provision - primarily 'schooling' - which educational research currently tends to prioritise.

*"People who see themselves as researchers may be full-time professionals in a university, independent organization or government body; or they may be researching as part of their work as teachers, managers or other professionals."*

**Andrew Morris and Lin Norman (2004)**  
***Collaborative Research in Practice. Learning and Skills Centre Report: section 1, page 1***

## What do we know about Fds and how do we know it?

Fds are potentially a radical development. In theory they are radical because their defining characteristics challenge many of the customary practices and received wisdoms of the established education system. The design and development of an Fd is a challenging and thought provoking process in comparison to more established forms of provision (see Brennan and Gosling, 2004 for illustrations of this). None of the characteristics of Fds are unique to the award but in combination and at the level of engagement defined by government investment Fds have the potential to transform aspects of current educational provision.

### The Defining Characteristics of Fds

*"The distinctiveness of Foundation Degrees depends upon the integration of the following characteristics: employer involvement; accessibility; articulation and progression; flexibility; and partnership. While none of these attributes is unique to Foundation Degrees, their clear and planned integration within a single award, underpinned by work-based learning, makes the award very distinctive."*

**Foundation degree qualification benchmark, October 2004, QAA (065 10/2004). Available at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/public/foundation/benchmark/FDQB.htm#define>**

They are also a break with historically defined practice in being a major top-down - i.e. government-led - innovation; the first major new award to enter HE in this way rather than by an evolution in established practice. As such they have been met by indifference and hostility in many places and are seen, even within parts of further education, as the triumph of a 'new vocationalism' which threatens the emancipatory purpose of HE; part, in fact of a 'McDonaldisation' of education more generally (see, for example, Armitage et al, 2003). The latter is associated with a view of education which is still based on enlightenment principles and sees vocational

education in its present form as 'restricting human potential' (Armitage et al, 2003: 32). This view ignores or marginalizes the arguments emerging from the widening participation literature which suggest that both culturally and educationally existing forms of provision exclude potential learners who either can't afford or are not attracted by what HE currently offers. This is not to say that Fds are a definitive response to this problem but they are at least an attempt to articulate an answer within a new context (WBL) which includes the involvement of new partners (public and private sector employers) and in a format which allows for flexibility of learning in time and space as well as the option to stay in employment whilst engaging in learning.

One of the questions, then, which Fds raise (almost by their very existence) is whether or not our liberal conceptions of the purpose of HE need to be modified in order to allow for different pathways and forms of progression through adult, continuing, further and higher education. A major issue of recent years has been how the now multiple routes through these different but interlinked forms of provision can be joined up. At the same time, the liberal view of HE as a rite of passage between compulsory education and the world of work is now in danger of becoming, in the light of the increasing costs of HE, an option for a small elite. Even if the purpose of HE is not widely questioned within HE itself its value is being questioned within society more generally and the learners who will be paying increased fees to attend universities will have to ask themselves serious questions about the purpose of their studies. Paradoxically, the reverse is also true in that the framers and developers of Fds will also have to ask themselves how work-focused and work-based forms of learning stand in relation to long established commitments within HE to intellectual freedom and learner autonomy.

Fds are, then, a potentially radical development but how radical they will be and whether they will fulfil their full potential depends on a

range of factors, not least their successful realisation at the pedagogic as well as at the employment level. But how will we know if they are successful, how will we know what adjustments to make in order to enhance their quality, and what criteria will we use to evaluate them without engaging in concerted research activity at all levels? These types of questions are only now starting to be asked and one of the main problems in responding to them is the lack of a reliable 'evidence' base. Even if the term 'evidence' here is interpreted in the broadest terms the relative dearth of data, information and systematic study of Fds is quite marked. As noted above, we owe much of our knowledge regarding Fds to government funded work, Fd support institutions, and practitioners but much of this - however valuable in itself - is in danger of being fragmented and anecdotal if there isn't a sustained attempt to support Fd research, scholarship and evaluation at different levels and in different forms. Action research can tell us a great deal about shifts in pedagogic practice but it cannot tell us much about the wider context in which Fds are developing or the links between Fds and widening participation at the national level. Slow as progress has been in the establishment of the need for professional development, research and scholarship on learning and teaching progress with Fds has been almost miniscule. Universities have had the advantage that - in the 'old' universities at least - a central part of their purpose has been academic research but in FE (and to some extent the new universities) research capacity has not been fostered or funded; and recent attempts to establish different missions within HE have meant that existing capacity to support research is very unevenly distributed. However, the growth of FE in HE and the influence of evidence-based practice and action research has led to initiatives to create capacity where it hasn't previously existed and in new forms. In this respect the work of the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) and the ESRC's Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) stand out.

### Transforming Learning Cultures (TLC) in Further Education Project

This TLRP-funded project has focused on the relationship between research and learning cultures in FE.

*“The Project addresses three problems: (i) the need for a robust evidence base to support the enhancement of learning and teaching in FE; (ii) the need for deeper understanding of the nature of learning cultures, how they impact upon learning, and the means by which they can be transformed to enhance and improve learning; and (iii) the need to promote a system-wide research capacity in the FE sector and beyond.”*

**Source:** <http://www.ex.ac.uk/sell/tlc/project2.htm>

All of this points, however, to the need for a range of different modalities of research regarding Fds which should complement and feed off each other. An outline agenda for this forms the final part of this article. Before proceeding to this, though, we need to ask what we have learnt from existing ‘research’, in whatever form, into Fds:

- We know something of the history and trajectory of Fd development from the now quite numerous official publications and evaluative reports which have characterised Fd progression. However, we know little of the experience of developers and institutions in terms of their engagement with Fds since no one has, to date, captured their experience or reflected upon its implications. The pace of Fd development - particularly at the outset - has been very rapid and there has only been limited opportunity for sustained reflection.
- We know something about the practices (re. design, development and delivery) which programme teams and providers have entered into in order to establish Fds as a viable programme of study. The value of two QAA reviews (one completed, the other in progress) will be that there will be some

systematic evaluation of Fds across a wide range of factors, even if this will leave aside other dimensions - such as widening participation - which are key to a fuller evaluation of Fds.

- The first QAA review of Fds didn't tell us very much about the detail of innovative and experimental practice within Fds since the full reports were not published. It did not tell us, for example, about where e-learning has worked and where it has not; about how personal development planning has been incorporated and whether it involves e-portfolios; about how providers interpret the QAA requirement for WBL to be treated as ‘central’ to Fds and whether or not simulation is an acceptable form of WBL; and it can't tell us how effective partnerships between educational providers, employers and other intermediaries (e.g. SSCs) can be achieved. We do know something about all of this from the attempts which have been made by organisations and institutions to gather and record evidence of ‘good practice’ but much more needs to be done to make this an effective resource for the sector as a whole and to make what we know about Fds comparable with what we know about other sectors of education.
- We know something about the size and scope of Fd provision, student numbers and background but there is very little comprehensive and systematic data. Fds are difficult to quantify because educational statistics cross institutional and sectoral boundaries, Fd programmes are relatively unstable because of their emerging nature, and data sources are, therefore, fragmented and incomplete. Numbers with respect to Fds are thus frequently ‘best guesstimates’; a situation which needs to change if we are going to evaluate Fds - in relation to the objectives which have been set for them - on the basis of the best available ‘evidence’.

### An agenda for change

All of the above leads organically towards the development of a research agenda for Fds which will

remedy some of the deficiencies identified in this article. As a new phenomenon, moreover, it also opens the possibility of doing things differently; in particular, of doing research in ways which underpin and complement Fd design, development and delivery as well as feed into wider policy and practice debates such as the significance and practice of WBL, of the relationship between vocational education and widening participation, and the potential for collaborative partnerships between educational providers, employers and other representative groups. All of this also opens up an exciting agenda for forms of research which are prepared to engage with change as well as play a role in shaping it. It implies a rethinking of the ways in which research is formulated, represented and consumed so that ‘really useful knowledge’ can become a reality rather than a policy-maker's vision.

If this were to come about what would it be useful to know about Fds?

Firstly, where, why and how employers have successfully engaged with the development and delivery of Fds. The fact that employers have been located at the heart of this process in design terms does not disguise the real difficulties which this engenders and the complex factors which influence engagement.

Secondly, partnership has been heavily researched in economic relations between, for example, different sized firms but it is a relatively recent concept in education and there is clearly a need to investigate the conditions and processes that contribute to successful partnerships.

Thirdly, WBL is neither entirely new nor wholly innovative but its design and delivery within Fds raises at a different level and on a larger scale issues about the negotiation, implementation and successful support of WBL.

Fourthly, Fds have been linked with innovation and the close association with learners in full or part time work means that innovative pedagogies have to engage with problems of multi-site delivery, the integration of

academic and work-based learning, and the involvement of employers in many aspects of the learning process. Fds are, therefore, a testing place for many of the recent innovations in learning theory and practice.

Finally, in this brief review, Fds are deeply implicated in the elaboration of new progression routes which characterise contemporary education. Fds are formally required to lead into Level 3 of an honours degree programme but they clearly may lead in many different directions - depending, for example, on professional requirements - as well as articulate, in terms of entry, with a range of other vocationally orientated qualifications (e.g. NVQs, vocational A levels, and Modern Apprenticeships) and with prior experiential learning.

#### Foundation Degree Forward (fdf) Research Aims

- To carry out research into issues of current and continuing concern regarding Foundation degrees (such as employer engagement, WBL, innovative practice, and widening participation) and disseminate the results of this research to partners, stakeholders and the general public.
- To map the field of Foundation degree provision through data profiling and case study based research.
- To facilitate action research and evidence-based practice by Foundation degree practitioners.
- To engage the educational research community in research regarding Foundation degrees and the employment and educational context within which they operate.
- To provide the opportunity for Foundation degree practitioners and researchers to publish the results of their own practice and engage in debate with the wider educational community.

The above is simply a sample of some of the issues which might be addressed by a coherent research agenda. Fds, as already noted, almost inevitably challenge received wisdoms and generate new forms of practice and engagement. As also

noted, however, any agenda needs to engage not only with the subject matter of research but also with its mode of operation. The challenging of the relevance of educational research, the advent of evidence-based practice and action research, and the new demands made by learners and employers on educational provision all require a rethinking of the role which research should play in the educational development process. At one level there need to be coherent links between research, policy and practice; at another the links need to be made between the scholarship of teaching and practitioner based action research. There are signs that some of this is taking place through diverse initiatives carried out by a range of agencies and individuals but if it is to have a coherent long-term future there needs to be stronger coordination, recognition and integration of these efforts.

#### Reading and References

- Armitage, A. et al (2003) *Teaching and Training in Post-Compulsory Education*. Maidenhead: Open University Press
- Beaney, P.W. (2005) 'Researching Foundation degrees: making a case for the relevance of research', *forward*, Issue 4.
- Brennan, L. and Gosling, D. (eds.) (2004) *Making Foundation Degrees Work*. Brentwood: SEEC
- Foundation Degree Taskforce (2004) *Foundation Degree Taskforce Report to Ministers*. DfES
- Hammersley, M. (2001) 'Some questions about evidence-based practice in education'. Paper presented at the symposium on "Evidence-based practice in education" at the Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association, University of Leeds, England, September 13-15, 2001 Available online at <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00001819.htm>
- Hammersley, M. (2002) *Educational Research, Policymaking and Practice*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing
- Longhurst, D. (2004) 'Foundation Degree Forward: research programme'. *forward*, Issue 2
- Longhurst, D. (2004) 'Foundation Degree Forward', *Educational Development*, Issue 5.1
- QAA (2003) *QAA Overview Report on Foundation Degree Reviews (conducted in 2003)*. QAA
- Silver, Harold (1999) *Researching Education: themes in teaching-and-learning*. Bristol: Policy Press

#### On the Web

- DfES [foundationdegree.org.uk](http://www.foundationdegree.org.uk)  
<http://www.foundationdegree.org.uk/fdf>  
<http://www.fdf.ac.uk/>
- Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark  
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/foundationDegree/benchmark/FDQB.asp>
- HEFCE  
<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/founddeg/>
- TLRP  
<http://www.tlrp.org/>
- Transforming Learning Cultures in FE  
<http://www.ex.ac.uk/sell/tlc/homepage.htm>
- UCAS  
<http://develop.ucas.com/FDCourseSearch/About.htm>

### Foundation Degree Forward Research Conference 2005

## Researching Foundation Degrees: Constructing a National Agenda

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2005

MIC Conference Centre  
 81-103 Euston Road,  
 London NW1 2EZ

#### Bookings

Bookings can be made with Jane Heslington at [j.heslington@fdf.ac.uk](mailto:j.heslington@fdf.ac.uk) or by phone on 01543 301 150.

#### Further Enquiries

Any further enquiries regarding the focus and content of the conference please contact Peter Beaney (Research Fellow) at:

Foundation Degree Forward, Lichfield Centre, The Friary, Lichfield, WS13 6QG  
 Fax: 01543 301 152 Email: [p.w.beaney@fdf.ac.uk](mailto:p.w.beaney@fdf.ac.uk)

# The right to resist

David Storey, University College Worcester

A reply to “53 Interesting Ways in Which Colleagues Resist Change” by Steve Outram 2004, *Educational Developments* 5.2, 1-4

I suspect most of us have witnessed, as an undergraduate, postgraduate or lecturer, far too many poorly delivered or articulated presentations from academics. In a general sense, then, it is no bad thing that recent years have witnessed a growing awareness of the need to pay more attention to modes of learning and teaching within the tertiary educational sector. There is an obvious need for academics to be aware of pedagogical developments and, in many respects, this is a long overdue development. Nevertheless, there are many who are sceptical about aspects of the burgeoning educational development “business” and a recent contribution by Stephen Outram (2004) in this publication serves to highlight some of the concerns people may have. As the title of Outram’s article suggests, he presents “53 interesting ways in which colleagues resist change”. To be more precise, rather than the 53 promised, the article actually lists 58 such ways! Leaving aside numerical issues, there seem to me to be a number of serious problems with his arguments.

Outram asks if a critical reaction by academics to change is “based on resistance or simply a reflexive response based on our occupational culture and values” (p3). While not doubting that both these factors may be important in some cases, there may also be other reasons for resisting change. Outram himself concedes that “not all change is positive and not all resistance is negative” (p4) and he further acknowledges that “there are times when change is inadvisable” (p4). He goes on to suggest that this may occur when preconditions have not been met or where outcomes have not been clearly articulated. However, these appear to be technical issues centring on the ways in which change is presented and implemented. Outram has nothing to say on a more fundamental point – that resistance to change may be well-founded and may reflect a genuine belief that such change is negative.

Outram claims that people may respond to suggested changes along the lines that they “do it already”. It is quite possible that in many instances this is true. Outram implies (perhaps not intentionally) that changes automatically disseminate down from the learning professionals rather than arising in a variety of different ways and issuing upwards and outwards. Underlying Outram’s piece is the apparent assumption that the educational development gurus are leading some sort of fight against the reactionary forces of darkness. There is (and has been) much innovative work and considerable evidence of imagination in learning and teaching strategies emerging independently of the quality enhancement business. Academic staff may already be innovative and good at devising new strategies of delivery and involvement. Part of the problem here are the assumptions that advances in teaching and learning are a

recent phenomenon and are the preserve of a coterie of professional experts. It may not be Outram’s intention to convey this sense but it certainly appears to be implied in his somewhat patronising delivery. We are all involved in managing change and the professionalisation of this activity is a little disturbing. Interestingly, in the same issue of *Education Developments*, Wareing (2004) comments on the off-putting style in which educational development materials are sometimes (often?) written - to which might be added the adoption of terminology such as Quality Enhancement (of which Outram is head at De Montfort University). Wareing also refers to the debate over whether educational development is an emerging discipline in its own right. I am not so sure that it is or that it should be, but in any event its practitioners might find they meet with a little less ‘resistance’ if they approached their task with a little more humility and less messianic zeal.

Outram’s article, and indeed the three authors he includes in his reference list (O’Toole, 1995, Maurer, 1996, Hultman, 1998), all give the distinct impression that change is good and that the sole purpose of educational development is to overcome resistance to change. In other words the key here (as is made clear in the title of Outram’s article) is how to get around resistance. This suggests that resistance is inherently bad and that change management is simply a case of convincing short-sighted, narrow-minded and backward staff of the desirability of new ways of doing things. This essentialises change as an entity and reduces the problem to one of implementation. But what if resistance to change is well-founded? While much change may well be needed, particular changes may often be nonsensical, ill-thought out or pure claptrap. This is not to argue that change is inevitably bad. The difficulty is not with change itself but with some specific changes which may not be wise, may not be appropriate within particular contexts or which may well just be change for the sake of change. There is a risk of assuming that anything new and seemingly innovative must be better than that which precedes it.

“Staff are already overloaded” is another item on Outram’s list. This may actually be a crucial point. Overwork may well be a serious problem and may also explain why some staff might quite legitimately wish that “the Union must agree to this first” and that implementing change might be “too stressful” unless “we get some free time”. The key here is that for many staff implementing new strategies and experimenting with different styles of delivery is a time-consuming business for which there may well be no commensurate reductions in other tasks. With no compensating reductions in workload, implementing change may be difficult. Staff in many departments are faced with heavy teaching workloads, pressures to publish

and increasing bureaucracy. In light of these various pressures, the time to consider and to implement changes to course delivery is limited and may, for some, become an additional burden associated with the job rather than the exciting and innovative challenge it might otherwise be. Life in what Neil Smith (2000) has alluded to as the “sausage factory” of contemporary academia does not permit most of us time to fully engage with particular developments.

It is useful to keep in mind the broader politics of the academy when exploring issues to do with learning and teaching. In the growth of the knowledge economy there has been an increasing emphasis on procedures linked to accountability and the proliferation of a terminology of excellence (having achieved excellence, what do we do next?) and quality (what type of quality? poor? medium? high?) as institutions compete for students, research grants and consultancy contracts. Increasingly academics are caught in what Fuller and Kitchin (2004) refer to as different dances set to different tunes. While Outram talks of the problems of change management, this often appears to amount to making staff do more with less. It might be argued that creating the time and space in which staff might think through their options, rather than being managed in a way which quite often means doing more things in less time, would be a better way of ensuring favourable outcomes.

While not denying that inertia may be a problem, I suspect that most academics are not opposed to change if those changes make sense and appear to present

potentially positive outcomes for students and/or staff. The problem is that we appear to be in the grip of a paradigm in which the medium takes pre-eminence over the message and style appears to be winning out over substance. If there is a sense that academia needs to shed an image of inertia because things have always worked in particular ways, then it should not be replaced by some brave new world mapped out in accordance with the new orthodoxies of the quality enhancers.

## References

- Fuller, D. and Kitchin, R. (2004) Radical theory/critical praxis: academic Geography beyond the academy? in Fuller, D. and Kitchin, R. (eds) *Radical theory/critical praxis: making a difference beyond the academy?* Praxis (e)Press, pp. 1-20. Available at: <http://www.praxis-eypress.org/rtcp/dfrk.pdf>
- Hultman, K. (1998) *Making Change Irresistible: Overcoming Resistance to Change in your Organisation*, Davies-Black, Palo Alto.
- Maurer, R. (1996) *Beyond the Wall of Resistance*, Bard Press, Austin.
- Outram, S. (2004) 53 interesting ways in which colleagues resist change. *Educational Developments* 5 (2) pp. 1-4.
- O'Toole, J. (1995) *Leading Change: Overcoming the Ideology of Comfort and the Tyranny of Custom*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Smith, N. (2000) Who rules the sausage factory. *Antipode* 32, pp. 330-339.
- Wareing, S. (2004) It ain't what you say, it's the way that you say it: an analysis of the language of educational development. *Educational Developments* 5 (2) pp. 9-11.

## David Storey

Senior Lecturer in Geography  
Department of Applied Sciences, Geography and Archaeology, University College Worcester

Recent changes to the QA/QE framework in the Scottish HEI sector show a divergence from the rest of the UK. Bob Matthew keeps us up to date with developments north of the border.

# The Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework

**Bob Matthew**, University of Glasgow

## Introduction

As Bob Dylan once said ‘*the times they are a-changing*. Well, in Scotland the landscape of learning and teaching and, in particular, the assurance of the quality of provision, and more importantly its enhancement, is very much *a-changing*.

Scotland has moved away from an inquisitorial form of QA to a new discursive model premised on Quality Enhancement (still with QA checks built in but with the responsibility for QA very much placed within the institution). The Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) model of Quality

Enhancement (and remember that Education is a power devolved to the Scottish Executive) is based on the Scottish Universities’ experience of both Institutional Audit and Subject Review and TQA. The outcomes of all this QA work led to a view that there was nothing fundamentally amiss with Scottish HE and that the future was about making it even better.

## The Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework, QEF

As a result of a consultation with Scottish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the SHEFC took the decision to move from a Quality Assurance

(QA) based model of monitoring its HEIs to one which is premised on Quality Enhancement (QE). The new approach was developed by the SHEFC’s Quality Working Group (QWG), which includes representatives from the Council itself, Universities Scotland, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Scottish Office, and the student body in Scotland. However, it must be stressed that there is still an element of QA within the Framework.

There are five elements to the QEF:

- An internal review process
- Public information on quality
- Student engagement in quality processes

- Quality enhancement engagements
- Enhancement Led Institutional Review, ELIR.

I will now briefly describe the essential elements of each of these five strands.

### An Internal Review Process

In the new model, the responsibility for quality assurance is placed firmly with the institution. The documentation on the process (QAA, 2003) states that an institution should have a *robust process of internal review for its provision* - and this includes **all** undergraduate, taught post-graduate and post-graduate research provision.

This model replaces the previous external Subject Review process (which replaced Teaching Quality Assessments), an external review process which took place at the level of department or teaching unit.

### Public Information on Quality

This section covers the information that an institution is required to make about the quality of its provision. SHEFC (2003) have taken the view that the public information about the quality of educational provision should:

- Provide assurances about the quality and standards of provision
- Provide information to inform student choice, and to assist employers and other stakeholders to clearly understand the nature of Scottish HE
- Provide information which helps current students to understand, engage with and make best use of institutional systems for quality improvement, and
- Provide information about the institution's educational processes which stimulates reflection on academic practice and the sharing of good practice within the institution and more widely.

At the time of writing there is still some uncertainty about the exact manner in which this aspect of the framework is to be implemented and further guidance from SHEFC is due to be published soon. In particular, the differences between the

requirements of the Higher Education Funding Council for England, HEFCE, and SHFEC on this aspect within this important area mean that great care will need to be taken by SHEFC to ensure that the implementation of this aspect of the framework does not disadvantage Scottish institutions when compared to their English counterparts.

### Student Engagement in Quality Process

SHEFC have taken a firm view that student engagement in quality processes is key to successful implementation of the QEF. In order to support this, a new organisation, Student Participation in Quality Scotland, SPARQS, was set up in 2003 (SPARQS 2004).

The organisation has three aims namely:

- To map the quality and quantity of student representation systems and structures across Scotland
- To identify the needs of the various educational institutions, students' associations and students in ensuring quality student representative systems and structures across Scotland and
- To provide training and development to enhance student representation systems and structures across Scotland.

SPARQS also has a key role in identifying good practice and advising the Funding Council and institutions on this.

However, it is to be hoped that student engagement will be more than representation on University Committees and visiting ELIR panels. What is being explored and developed in this area of the framework is how students can be more influential in the enhancement of their own learning experience. A simple example might be the following: almost all institutions collect student feedback on provision (be it a course or university service). In the new world of 'enhancement' of Higher Education provision, there might be more consideration regarding the 'student

voice' in discussions on how to respond to student feedback – how can students influence enhancement-led change? Whilst some have argued that this is difficult in a system where many students are engaged in employment to support their studies, Hill et al. (2003) have shown how, in a small way, this might be done.

### Quality Enhancement Engagements

In order to support the QEF, SHEFC have introduced a national programme of enhancement themes aimed at developing and sharing good practice in learning and teaching in higher education. Whilst institutional engagement with these engagements is not compulsory, it is expected that institutions will at least discuss (during an ELIR visit) how they might use the resources developed through the themes.

In the academic year 2003-04 the first themes were announced by the Council. These were

- Assessment in Higher Education
- Responding to Student Needs in Higher Education.

Each of the themes had a steering group chaired by a Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) or equivalent. The two groups adopted somewhat different approaches. The Assessment group adopted a two pronged approach. Firstly, it set out to have a sector-wide debate about the Honours Classification System and, secondly, it put into place a series of seminars on aspects on assessment in Higher Education. These seminars include both Scottish and international speakers. Full details of the outcomes of these events are to be published both in paper form and on the web (QAA, 2003a).

The Responding to Student Needs group adopted a very different approach. They adopted a research approach and visited all Scottish Higher Education Institutions to meet with students and discuss their needs. Having done so, they commissioned a series of 'state of the art' reports on the key areas identified in visits. Again, these

reports will be published on the Enhancement Web Site.

For the next academic year, two further Enhancement Themes have been identified and steering groups established. The two themes are Employability and Flexible Delivery.

A new five year rolling programme of enhancement themes is currently being rolled out. This programme of work consists of seven further themes, the majority of which are more in-depth studies of previous themes e.g. formative assessment is a new theme that leads directly on from the work of the Assessment theme in round 1. These new themes are not all intended to run for the same length of time; some will be of short duration, others may run for 2+ years.

In addition a group has been set up to look at change management, particularly with regard to learning and teaching and how the enhancement themes are being used by Institutions in this process.

### Enhancement Led Institutional Review, ELIR

The new QE model places responsibility for the Quality Assurance of its teaching provision on the university, as an internal process. SHEFC has replaced Institutional Audit by ELIR, Enhancement Led Institutional Review. ELIR is both a Quality Assurance check and a Quality Enhancement tool. Fundamental to the ELIR process is a requirement that institutions have in place a robust internal review process for their teaching provision, with provision being reviewed on a 5 year cycle. During the ELIR process there is no 'drilling down' into teaching provision nor explicit visits to academic units to examine teaching and learning issues.

A requirement of SHEFC is that institutions have a Quality Enhancement Strategy (there is no formal requirement in Scotland for Institutions to have a Learning and Teaching Strategy). In the ELIR process the implementation and impact of the QE Strategy is an area of legitimate discussion during the

visit. Full details of the ELIR process can be found at the QAA web site (QAA 2003b).

### Reflecting on the QEF in Practice

My own University (Glasgow) was one of the first to go through the ELIR process in early 2004. It was an interesting experience. Whilst it is fair to say that it has not changed the emphasis on research within the institution, it is clear that there is a sea change within the institution with regard to enhancing learning and teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Changes have been implemented to support service departments to ensure that they are more focussed on QE, not something that happens often in an *ancient university*.

Reflecting on the whole experience, what is clear is that both the SHEFC and the Scottish Executive wish to see Scottish Higher Education maintain and improve its high quality provision. They have developed, with the sector, a process for doing this which is trying to balance QA and QE. There is strong commitment in Scotland to making the new process work effectively and efficiently. Therefore, those of us in the vanguard of implementing the process have a strong desire to share experience, with a view to enhancing the model next time round.

One of the concerns that some have been expressing is that there is danger that QE could very easily become QA; for example, attendance at QE theme events could easily be used as a measure of 'institutional engagement' with the theme - clearly not something that I would like to see. It seems to me that in Scotland we must continue to stress the notion that QE has to be bottom-up if it is to work. After all, it is through interaction between staff and students that learning is best fostered.

So, to those of you who do not work in a SHEFC funded institution, I would urge you watch this space - they are interesting times in Scotland.

### References

- Hill, Y., Lomas, L. & MacGregor, J. (2003) Students' perceptions of quality in Higher Education. *Quality Assurance in Education*, **11**(1) pp 15 - 20.
- Quality Assurance Agency (2003a) The SHEFC Quality Enhancement Engagements available at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/scottishenhancement> last accessed 15th December 2003.
- Quality Assurance Agency (2003b) Handbook for Enhancement Led Institutional Review in Scotland. QAA:Glasgow, available at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/> last accessed 15th December 2003.
- SHEFC(2003) Circular letter HE/19/03 Public Information on quality: guidance notes for institutions available at <http://www.shefc.ac.uk/> last accessed 29th September 2004.
- SPARQS (2004) Student Participation in Quality Scotland, <http://www.sparqs.org.uk>, accessed 14th October 2004.
- Bob Matthew**, Director, Teaching & Learning Service  
University of Glasgow  
Florentine House  
53 Hillhead Street  
GLASGOW  
G12 8QQ  
Tel: 0141-330-3197  
Fax: 0141-330-4987  
email: [r.matthew@admin.gla.ac.uk](mailto:r.matthew@admin.gla.ac.uk)

## Notice to Publishers

Books for review should be sent to:

### Rachel Segal

Book Review Editor, c/o  
The Higher Education Academy,  
Genesis 3,  
Innovation Way,  
York Science Park,  
York YO10 5DQ

Email:  
[r.a.segal@heacademy.ac.uk](mailto:r.a.segal@heacademy.ac.uk)  
or [office@seda.ac.uk](mailto:office@seda.ac.uk)

# Professional Dialogue: an innovative inclusion in staff development

Anne Stevenson, The Open University

*An account of a discussion paper given at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual SEDA Conference*

This brief account of the use of professional dialogue in ‘evidencing’ the benefits to practice experienced by Open University Associate Lecturers’ who had participated in the Associate Lecturer Development and Accreditation Pathway formed the basis of a discussion paper given at the 9<sup>th</sup> annual SEDA Conference

The Open University (OU) is a distance learning institution that employs some 8,000 associate lecturers (ALs). ALs are part-time tutors who work with groups of students throughout the 13 administrative regions of the university. All ALs undergo a programme of induction and a two year probation period. They comprise the human interaction point between the university and the student. They assess and provide feedback on students’ course work in such a way that, via dialogue, they teach and support their students’ academic development. They also provide tutorial and other support via a variety of media throughout the year.

After passing probation, for the past two and a half years ALs have been able to opt to join a development pathway known as the Associate Lecturer Development and Accreditation Pathway (ALDAP). ALDAP provides support for structuring and engaging in reflection on practice and hence the planning of individual continuing professional development. ALDAP has gained recognition by SEDA for those ALs who have participated in the activities promoted by ALDAP and have demonstrated the value to their practice of doing so by taking part in a professional dialogue (PD) with a colleague.

ALDAP encourages ALs to write reflective commentaries on all aspects of their work. For ease of analysis, the AL’s role was divided into areas which comprise the ALDAP ‘framework’.

## ALDAP framework

1. Planning
2. Teaching
3. Assessing
4. Developing effective learning environments and their support
5. Reviewing and evaluating
6. Developing
7. Integrating scholarship, research and professional practice

It was entirely optional as to what the AL actually did with such written commentaries. There was no compulsion to produce a portfolio. ALDAP providers

and participants sought a means of recording and recognising participation in ALDAP that would enable ALs to critically analyse and change their practice where they felt that change would benefit their students’ learning.

One of the major features of the work of tutoring as an OU AL is that it is largely an isolated occupation. This isolation extends to reflection on teaching as well as actual practice. The production of written reflective commentaries may reveal a skilled writer but reflecting alone has several potential pitfalls. Among these is the risk that it can be self-congratulatory or self-effacing; it may rely on intuitive judgements and tacit understanding and it may not fully evaluate feedback.

The question asked by both the providers and ALDAP participants was “Is ALDAP making any impact on the practice of participants?” ALs themselves in workshops, e-mails or informal conversations, referred frequently to the positive benefits of engaging with ALDAP activities but how could they demonstrate them? Some form of collaborative reflection might bring external stimuli to the process of reflection and perhaps result in a more meaningful process that would enable reflection to feed into improving practice. For example, such stimuli might be information, knowledge and ideas other than one’s own, or good questions and peer feedback, preferably in an appreciative environment

Talking with colleagues has long been identified throughout HE as an important means of enabling improvement in practice. If this could be structured and set in the context of ALDAP, it might provide a means for ALs to demonstrate that their practice had indeed improved as a result of their participating in ALDAP.

The use of some form of professional dialogue as a method of recognising or endorsing attainment is well established in people-based professional settings, e.g. business management, social work and school teaching. It can be used alongside other forms of personal development or assessment but its main strength is that it exposes and recognises involvement in activities that are difficult, if not impossible, to ‘evidence’ in any other way.

With guidelines produced by Maggie Coats, Senior Lecturer in the OU’s Centre for Outcomes-based Education, professional dialogue was first piloted with ALs who had taken part in ALDAP in the summer of 2003. The guidelines highlighted the key characteristics of professional dialogue:

- that it is not assessment or testing
- there is no pass or fail

- the purpose is to allow the AL to celebrate their participation in ALDAP
- it is carried out between peers
- the facilitator merely guides
- there is no script or note taking
- the timing and areas to be explored are agreed prior to dialogue.

We took as our definition of professional dialogue in the context of ALDAP as:

*“Dialogue between peers, one of whom facilitates the discussion to allow the other to explicitly appreciate the different ways in which ALDAP has extended their understanding and practice”*

Prior to the dialogue taking place, the facilitator and participant agreed on the medium and the timing of the dialogue; the areas of AL work (as described by ALDAP) that would be covered; and whether the dialogue would be observed by colleagues.

The transcripts of the pilot professional dialogues revealed that the three purposes of professional dialogue in the context of ALDAP were clearly fulfilled:

1. To allow an AL to explore their experience of participating in the ALDAP process and to confirm the relevance of that experience to their OU practice.

A professional dialogue participant quote:  
*“I had just come through a TMA [tutor marked assignment] marking that I had struggled with and ...um ... doing the ALDAP review forced me to think why I had struggled with it and that was helpful”*

2. To provide space for an AL to verbalise their approach to ‘reflective practice’.

A professional dialogue participant quote related to TMA marking, in response to the question “How do you know you’re a reflective person?”:  
*“Oh dear, that was a bit of a chore doing those TMA’s’ Um.. was it only a chore? No, it was quite pleasurable in a way ... Why was it pleasurable? I learnt a lot. Why did you learn a lot? Because that is one area I’ve never gone into in depth before .. Like one question.. you realise you hadn’t really understood it. And that’s a process that continues without really needing a prompt and um.. you may want to say or write down ‘I’ve learnt this’ ... or ‘I then go on doing that’ ... but somehow it’s with you and it does progress you. Doing it formally helps because then you go back to your notes and say ‘Ah yes, that’s it!’ ”*

3. To encourage an AL to identify and discuss possible ways of taking forward their professional development.

A professional dialogue participant quote:  
*“I am using that approach [identifying level 2 & 3 study skills] as study support counsellor - so it’s all*

*very well doing it for someone else but can I do it for my own students? And can I do it in a way that is not going to take me over completely? A way that I can manage ... because I don’t want to double my work but I would like to identify and address those areas within my tutor group... I don’t know if that could be an action research?”*

After an initial pilot (during which the quotes above were recorded), the ALDAP co-ordinators who were responsible for the support of ALs taking part in ALDAP in each of the thirteen OU regions, spent two days exploring professional dialogue. By the end of these two days each region had a co-ordinator who had experienced professional dialogue both as a participant and as a facilitator. On returning to their region, each co-ordinator extended an invitation to all ALs in that region who had experienced ALDAP to volunteer to take part in PD. An informal phone call prior to the professional dialogue enabled the AL to have as much information as necessary about the purpose and procedures involved. They were encouraged to identify, prior to the dialogue, which aspects of the seven work areas they would like to explore during the dialogue. It was felt that one of the first four areas would enable the AL to talk about what they actually do and one of the last three areas would enable them to review their practice and explore future plans.

Before professional dialogue was offered to individual ALDAP participants, each dialogue was observed by other potential participants and facilitators. An additional, and perhaps unexpected, benefit of this was that observing dialogue could be in itself a developmental experience. Professional dialogue in a group setting has now been piloted in the Scottish region of the OU.

Experience so far suggests that the main features of successful professional dialogue are that

- it takes place between two people who do not tutor the same course
- it involves plenty of pauses and ‘thinking’ time
- the participant is encouraged to identify actual examples from their practice
- there is positive affirmation in response to exploration and exposure
- there is clear evidence of a reflective approach, even though the word ‘reflection’ may not be used.

To those of us taking part in professional dialogue, the benefits of such an experience to personal and professional development have been very evident. SEDA agreed with this and has recognised that ALs taking part in ALDAP and professional dialogue are eligible for the SEDA Professional Development Framework Award ‘Supporting Learning’.

**Anne Stevenson** may be contacted via COBE, The Open University.

E-mail: [Y.A.Stevenson@open.ac.uk](mailto:Y.A.Stevenson@open.ac.uk)

# A systematic approach for staff and educational developers who would like evidence to inform their practice

**Peter Kahn FSEDA**, University of Manchester, and **Ranald Macdonald FSEDA**, Sheffield Hallam University

*This article is based on a workshop initially given at the 9th Annual SEDA Conference for Staff and Educational Developers, 16-17 November 2005.*

## Introduction

We accept in principle the need to inform our development activity from an appropriate evidence base. The reality in practice, however, is often very different; we may glance at some research or ignore relevant findings because we fail to see the overall picture. After all, we have to get something done and there is a vast literature on possible courses of action - if we only had time to look at that as well! And there is often no expectation that we need to demonstrate in a more scholarly fashion that our approach is well grounded, unlike the situation with research proposals. The factors that work against a wider use of the evidence base are significant.

It is evident, then, that we need not only to be more convinced as to the rationale for employing the appropriate evidence base more explicitly within our work - but that we also need a practical way forward to facilitate our accessing the relevant literature. In moving ahead it is important to draw on both existing approaches to the use of evidence within professional practice (e.g. within medicine; see for instance Sackett *et al* (2000)) and the literature on research synthesis (Cooper, 1998); the current debate on evidence-based teaching in higher education is also relevant (see Higher Education Academy, 2004).

This article explicitly addresses one particular approach to establishing an evidence-informed approach to staff and educational development. Readers are invited to undertake their own reviews of the evidence-base, based on a protocol and tailored to a specific set of their own needs. However, before outlining

our approach in the section below entitled 'Carrying out a review: the protocol', it is important to look at the context which led to its development.

## Contrasts with evidence-based medicine

Our approach to engaging with the evidence base is derived in significant part from the practice of evidence-based medicine, where practitioners frame specific questions and then interrogate in a structured format the evidence-base of reviews and original studies. Lessons from evidence-based medicine are particularly important given that busy practitioners have limited time; any method clearly needs to be realistic. A number of contrasts are, however, apparent with evidence-based medicine.

The evidence base for staff and educational development is significantly weaker than for medicine. While a medical practitioner is likely to be able to access several recent reviews of a topic of interest (see for instance Sackett *et al*, 2004), this is not the case for staff and educational development, or even for higher education more widely as Knight (2004) argues. In effect, practitioners involved in staff and educational development need to conduct their own reviews of the literature. This is especially so when applying a genuinely novel approach to a development need. It will thus be important to draw on ideas from literature and systematic reviews, although one could clearly not expect an individual practitioner to carry out a review to the same extent or with comparable rigour.

Medical research, however, also has

a clear basis in natural science, with its widely generalisable laws. A greater degree of uncertainty is evident within human behaviour, giving rise to a wide range of exceptions to any claim of a general nature. MacIntyre (1984) argues that both predictability and unpredictability characterise the social sciences. Even if a large body of research were to exist on the impact of staff and educational development, or of higher education, it would still be difficult to shape practice on the basis of research. Knight (2004) further suggests that research will at best reduce uncertainty rather than eliminate it. A focus on evidence alone will clearly be inadequate in staff and educational development.

## Practitioner-focused reviews

In many ways the challenge of uncertainty brings us to the relationship between theory and practice in the social sciences. Gustavsen (2001) draws on the thought of Habermas (1973) to contend that theory cannot simply be straightforwardly applied to practice. For Habermas, the development of theory and the improvement of practice are located within different discourses – a direct relationship is too simplistic a notion. Gustavsen argues that we need a mediating discourse, which will typically involve relationships between practitioners that are based around their practice, to which theory or researchers may contribute.

The model proposed below involves a systematic process, or protocol, for individual practitioners to follow by which they engage with the research literature. Where possible this is

carried out in collaboration with colleagues. Protocols are widely used when developing initial expertise in a sophisticated activity (e.g. carrying out an evaluation, giving a presentation, working in teams, etc.) Their use ensures a systematic approach that assists in improving the way in which you make use of evidence within your practice.

Rather than simply looking to apply the results of a pre-existing synthesis of research, as might occur in evidence-based medicine, however, the process of carrying out a structured review of the literature may itself lead to insight on the part of the practitioner into both the theory and the associated evidence base. An important stage in the development of this systematic process will be to research the extent to which this actually occurs, although anecdotal evidence (e.g. within initial uses of this protocol and from Prebble *et al* (2004)) suggests that this can occur. The protocol may be particularly useful at the individual level, for the access to the literature that it afforded the individual who carried out. The protocol thus helps to shape a mediating discourse between the evidence base and practice.

### Carrying out a review: the protocol

The use of the protocol is based on completing a template, which involves specifying the aim of the review, a brief description of any underpinning theory, a review question, the information sources which will be searched, a list of search terms, an appraisal of the evidence for its validity and relevance (leading to a synthesis of the evidence), a summary of how the evidence might inform practice, an evaluation of the process as a whole, and an indication as to whether the review has led to any contribution to the evidence base. An example of a completed protocol (along with the template) is available at:

<http://www.seda.ac.uk/confs/birmingham04/ReviewProtocolweb.doc>

In practice it should be possible to complete a basic review in around half a day, although the actual extent will clearly depend on the time

available and the desired scope of the review. We now provide further notes on the individual sections of the protocol:

#### Aim of the review

Staff and educational development is concerned with improving educational processes and the practices and capabilities of educators. Developments are, however, usually carried out by following specific activities to meet particular needs. What are you hoping to achieve by carrying out this review? For instance, you might be carrying out the review to decide how best to address a specific development need, in which case you should state the need. Or you might be interested in finding out how best to carry out an already predetermined activity. You might be interested in finding out background information on a specific area of work. This stage of the protocol involves a clear and succinct statement of what the review is hoping to achieve.

#### Prompt

- What is the aim of the review?

#### Underpinning theory

It is important to identify theoretical concepts and models that will underpin activity designed to meet the development need. This provides a more secure basis to frame the review question, and facilitates access to the relevant information base and synthesis of findings. It is particularly important that an appropriate match exists between your own conceptualisation of the area and that of the studies that you locate during the review. Note that you may need to carry out an initial literature search to identify the relevant theory if you are not already familiar with the field.

#### Prompts

- Are there any established theoretical models that help to explain the effectiveness of interventions?
- What theoretical concepts underpin practice within this area?
- What observable events determine if your concepts are present in a given setting?

#### Review question

The review question is an answerable question that seeks specific information related to the development need/proposed intervention. The aim is to locate information or data that can be used to answer a question – this, after all, is what evidence actually is (Carr, 1964, cited in Knight (2004)). An answerable question is likely to incorporate at least two elements:

- Nature of the proposed Intervention
- Outcome(s) of the intervention

In setting a question it is important to be aware that some concepts are broad, allowing a wide range of possible ways to test if they are operating in a given setting. One may need to select specific ways in which the concept is operating (i.e. spell out what will you actually observe to see if the concept is operating). It is also possible to define concepts too narrowly, and thus exclude important studies from the review – but in this case it will be possible to widen the concept at a later stage of the review.

#### Prompts

- Does your question relate to the actual intervention you are considering?
- Does it address the outcome of possible interventions?
- Does your question address the core features of the practice on which you are looking for evidence?
- Does your review question incorporate reference to observable events?

#### Examples of Review Questions

1. What evidence is there that processes that connect reflection, recording, planning and action improve student learning? (Note: this question incorporates a theoretical model to account for student learning.)
2. What is the impact of problem-based learning on student employability? (Note: this question incorporates established concepts, but as yet these are not linked to observable events. One would need to further define what was meant by both problem-based learning and employability.)

3. What strategies have been employed to promote reflective practice within programmes of initial professional development in teaching for academic staff? (Note: it is implicit here that the review will seek to ascertain the relative effectiveness of the different strategies.)

### **Locating the best evidence**

One of the key challenges is to locate appropriate evidence, especially where the evidence base is weak; this is especially so for the field of staff and educational development, as well as for teaching in higher education more widely. Locating best evidence involves two main elements:

- a. *Selection of information resources*  
Initially one might start with reviewing a wide range of information resources, until experience indicates which resources are most likely to yield the best evidence. In order to find relevant studies, it would thus be advisable to consider making use of the following: bibliographies; electronic databases; websites; hand searching of key publications.
- b. *Design of search strategy*  
Typically involves the selection of keywords, drawn from your review question, the underpinning theory or from how relevant concepts are operationalised.

#### *Prompts for selection of information resources*

- Who can I ask who might already have specialist expertise in the relevant area to identify relevant information resources?
- Which information resources are most likely to yield rich sources of data on the review question? (Details for some possible information resources are also provided at the website indicated above.)

#### *Prompts for search strategy*

- What search terms are suggested by your answerable question?
- What further search terms would help to refine the review? (e.g. if an initial search yields too many studies)

### **Critical appraisal of evidence**

It is essential that any information that is located is appraised for its validity and its relevance to the research question; this will usually involve asking a number of critical questions, such as those given below. Once valid and relevant information has been obtained, it is then possible to synthesise the evidence so that it can be applied to practice. Systematic reviews usually employ dedicated software to synthesise data, and often involve sophisticated statistical analysis that are primarily designed for quantitative data. Such approaches are beyond the scope of this protocol; we simply rely here on an informal synthesis carried out within the context of the initial theoretical framework. A critical appraisal of the evidence thus involves three steps:

- Validity of evidence
- Relevance of evidence
- Summary/synthesis of evidence.

#### *Prompts for validity*

- Has there been any evaluation of the information?
- Does the methodology employed within the study follow any recognised methodology or process? (e.g. Is a research question posed within the study? Does the study outline the methodology that it has employed? Have possible forms of bias been explicitly addressed?)
- Does the study provide links to any established theory?
- Has the information been subjected to any form of peer review?

#### *Prompts for relevance*

- How relevant is the focus of the study to your review question?
- Are the outcomes sufficiently positive to warrant further consideration?
- Is the proposed strategy feasible in your setting?
- How close is your own context to the setting within the study? (e.g. Level of students; clients; discipline; student body; educational setting; single department/institution wide; etc.)

#### *Prompts for synthesis*

- What systemic patterns are present within the information?

- How can you order, categorise or summarise the data?
- What assumptions have you made in your synthesis of the data?
- Is it possible to employ more than one approach to synthesising the data?

### **Application of evidence within practice**

Design and carry out a specific intervention (usually in collaboration with colleagues), in light of the evidence gained during the review. This ensures that the evidence located during the review is integrated with practice.

One might want to define the intervention in terms of a project (e.g. define specific goals, measurable/realistic outcomes, timescale for completion, named individuals with responsibility for the project, person acting as project sponsor).

#### *Prompts*

- Who do I need to influence to secure support for the proposed activity?
- Who else should I involve in the design of the activity?
- What other factors need to be taken into account, in addition to the evidence on what is most effective (e.g. availability of support and funding, systems analysis, fit with institution, strategic dimension, etc.)?

### **Evaluation of review process**

If you are to inform your practice through reviews on a long-term basis you should seek to enhance your ability to carry out and apply such reviews. Self-evaluation is thus an important part of adopting this approach to staff and educational development.

#### *Prompts on setting review questions*

- Have I been able to address genuine development needs?
- How aware am I of any theory that underpins the development need?
- How well formulated was the review question?
- Do I have a system to note down possible questions for future reviews?
- Am I encouraging other people to ask and answer specific review questions?

*Prompts on locating best evidence*

- Am I continuing to find new information resources to search?
- Were there any other information resources that I should have consulted?
- Am I becoming more efficient at searching?
- Am I using all of the facilities that are available when searching (e.g. limiters, thesaurus)

*Prompts on critical appraisal*

- Am I actually critically appraising the information at all? If not, why not?
- What notice do I take of the critical appraisal?
- Are there any aspects of the process of critically appraising evidence that I continue to find confusing? If so, what action can I take to develop understanding?

*Prompts on application of evidence*

- Has the review subsequently affected any development activities?
- Has the review helped convince other people to adopt a specific approach?
- How am I trying to ascertain whether the review had any impact on practice?
- Are there any indications as to the impact of the review on the activity?

**Contribution to the evidence base**

You may wish to further extend the use of the protocol to consider how you plan to use both the review itself and your intervention to contribute to the evidence base. The protocol includes a further box to facilitate this activity.

**Conclusion**

There still remain issues as to whether practitioners have the time available to conduct even a limited review of the evidence base; Jackson (2004) raises this as a key issue in engaging with the evidence base. The use of a protocol may well assist in this process, but further strategies are likely to be necessary, to integrate its use into aspects of practice. Staff and educational developers may well be able to incorporate such an approach into their own work: ensuring that planned developments are accompanied by reviews of the evidence base or that policy papers

take account of the research.

However, the protocol may also be used more widely by lecturers and others in higher education. For instance, institutions and organisations providing project funding could require a systematic engagement with the evidence base. Initial qualifications on teaching in higher education could similarly extend the ways in which they expect participants to justify their practice with reference to the evidence base. Indeed, in its requirements for Registered Practitioner status, the Higher Education Academy could expect candidates to demonstrate that their practice is indeed rooted at least in part in such systematic engagement. It is only with such integration into standard patterns of professional development that any such method will be more widely adopted.

There is clearly potential for further activity in this area. We would finally like to emphasise that these notes represent work in progress. The authors would welcome any comment on the protocol or any examples of completed protocols from practitioners.

**Acknowledgements**

We are grateful to those who have participated in the two workshops on this approach, contributing to its development.

**References and Further Reading**

- Carr E H (1964) *What is History?*, Penguin, London
- Clegg S (2004) Critical readings: progress files and the production of the autonomous learner, *Teaching in Higher Education* 9 (3) pp 287-297
- Cooper H (1998) *Synthesizing research: a guide for literature reviews* (Third Edition) Sage, London
- Gough D (2004) 'Systematic Review' *Public discussion on the meaning, value and use of an evidence-based approach in higher education*, [Online, accessed 16/11/04] <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp>
- Gustavsen B (2001) 'Theory and Practice: the mediating discourse', in Reason P and Bradbury H (eds) *Handbook of Action Research*, Sage Publications, London, pp 17-26

Habermas J (1973) *Theory and Practice*, Polity Press, London

Higher Education Academy (2004) *Public discussion on the meaning, value and use of an evidence-based approach in higher education*, [Online, accessed 16/11/04] <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp>

Jackson N (2004) 'The meanings of evidence based practice in higher education', *Public discussion on the meaning, value and use of an evidence-based approach in higher education*, [Online, accessed 16/11/04] <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp>

Knight P (2004) 'Reducing Uncertainty', *Public discussion on the meaning, value and use of an evidence-based approach in higher education*, [Online, accessed 16/11/04] <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp>

MacIntyre A (1984) *After Virtue*, second edition, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame

Morris C (2004) 'Towards an evidence based approach to quality enhancement', *Public discussion on the meaning, value and use of an evidence-based approach in higher education*, [Online, accessed 16/11/04] <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp>

Prebble T et al (2004) *Impact of Student Support Services and Academic Development Programmes on Student Outcomes in Undergraduate Tertiary Study*, Massey University College of Education, New Zealand [Online, accessed 25th April 2005], [http://www.minedu.govt.nz/web/downloadable/dl10247\\_v1/ugradstudentoutcomes.pdf](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/web/downloadable/dl10247_v1/ugradstudentoutcomes.pdf)

Sackett D et al (2000) *Evidence-based medicine* (Second Edition) Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh

Sharpe S and Ravenscroft A (2004) Active artefacts: representing our knowledge of learning and teaching, *Educational Developments* 5 (2) pp 16-21

Slavin R E (1986) 'Best evidence synthesis: an alternative to meta-analytic and traditional reviews', *Educational Researcher* 15, pp 5-11

**Correspondence**

**Peter Kahn FSEDA**  
University of Manchester  
[Peter.Kahn@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Peter.Kahn@manchester.ac.uk)

**Ranald Macdonald FSEDA**  
Sheffield Hallam University  
[r.macdonald@shu.ac.uk](mailto:r.macdonald@shu.ac.uk)

# Interview with Rob Ward, Director of the Centre for Recording Achievement

**Steve Outram**, The Higher Education Academy

Steve: Hello Rob, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for *Educational Developments*. You are Director of the Centre for Recording Achievement, could we start by saying a little about the CRA- where has it come from and what does it do?

*Rob: Happy to! The Centre began life as a two year Project funded by the (then) Employment Department in 1991. This was hosted by the Wigan Local Education Authority (strange but true)! The emphasis was upon encouraging recognition within the HE admissions process that a range of skills, qualities and capabilities was necessary for success in HE, and on encouraging the recording achievement processes in schools and colleges in helping applicants to document and evidence these. Plus we were keen, even at that stage, to develop such practice further within HE.*

*Since then we've developed - a lot! We're now an educational charity and membership organisation that provides a range of services to the HE sector in particular. We support work to implement Personal Development Planning, whether within institutions or subject communities, and to connect this to key themes such as student employability and widening participation initiatives. We also look out from HE to support similar work in schools/colleges, with employers and in CPD contexts. We have a developing interest in research and electronic portfolio building. And we still have a base in Wigan.*

I know that the CRA has been centrally involved in supporting institutions and colleagues in the initiative to include a Professional Development Planning (PDP) element in higher education curricula in English higher education institutions. This is a challenging initiative. How successful do you think higher education institutions have been, so far, in developing and embedding PDP?

*The PDP initiative is unique in HE in that it offers the only example I know about of a sector-mandated policy. As the agreed implementation date approaches, practice is - perhaps inevitably - variable but, I think, improving. We have come a long way but we still have a way to travel. So the implementation date will be one staging point in ensuring we continue to aim for high quality practice that supports student learning and development.*

And for those institutions at the early stages of development, how can the CRA help?

*For staff chosen to lead this work, it's often a question of finding their way into a 'community of interest'. So we have a website, at <http://www.recordingachievement.org/>*

*which offers a range of illustrations of practice at institutional and programme level, with connections to the work of Subject Centres amongst others. We publish the 'PDP-UK' Newsletter for the Higher Education Academy to which anyone can subscribe, and we run a series of Workshops and Conferences open to all. Plus anyone with a little spare cash can join the Centre as either an individual or can subscribe on behalf of their institution; then our individual consultancy comes free. Equally importantly, we can help colleagues appreciate what may already be taking place within their institution. It may not be called PDP - indeed it does not have to be - but there is often a good deal of what we might call 'PDP-congruent practice' around. Helping people start with what is already present rather than with a clean sheet of paper is often the best way. And we have some audit tools which can provide a basis for surfacing what already exists.*

Rob, I know that you have been a key member of the Burgess Scoping Group; let's talk about the Burgess Report - *Measuring and recording student achievement* - which was published in November 2004. Within the recommendations about recording achievement and the possible end to the honours classification system there are a number of statements about PDP. One of the suggestions made by the Report to avoid confusion and aid communication is the development of a 'detailed glossary of terms' [para 117]. Perhaps you could say a little bit about the most commonly confused terms: PDP; Progress File; and Record of Achievement?

*OK, though others may disagree!*

*PDP (Personal Development Planning), which started out as a recommendation of the Dearing Report, has an agreed definition: 'a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and / or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development'. The 'structured and supported' bit is really important, it gives us the opportunity to hold on to key learning. Most if not all of us reflect on missed opportunities and on things that go well but we don't necessarily try to capture that so we can make use of it on another occasion.*

*Progress File in HE refers to the institutional Transcript as well as the PDP element, though we are currently undertaking some work to establish whether this link is more in theory than practice.*

*In schools and colleges, though, Progress Files, as introduced by the DfES, really emphasise the PDP element. 'Progress File: Achievement Planner' is defined as 'a set of interactive materials designed to help young people and*

adults manage their own learning and career development (see <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/progressfile/>). And Records of Achievement, perhaps in the form of the National Record of Achievement, tended to emphasise the summary record side of things. In schools and colleges, the NRA has now been phased out in favour of the Progress File.

One of the key issues addressed by the Burgess Scoping Group is stakeholder engagement with recording achievement in general and views about Progress Files in particular [para 54]. What do we know about employer views and student views about Progress Files?

*In both cases, I think it is less about a Progress File as a File and more about what undertaking PDP activities allows you to do more effectively. Students want to be able to present themselves to others more effectively, to talk about their strengths and areas for development. As Bob Burgess himself has noted: 'students themselves are crucial purveyors of information about learning and achievement'. Plus, they increasingly need the skills and competencies to manage their own lives in increasingly less supported working environments. In similar vein, employers don't necessarily want to see massive portfolios of evidence, though some areas of career progression will require specific evidence of competence or achievement. Most want students who are able to present themselves effectively through the employers own selection system, and to articulate relevant learning and achievement within the employer framework.*

The Report would seem to complement the earlier Tomlinson Report on the 14 - 19 Curriculum. How much, do you think, the Burgess recommendations will be affected if, as seems likely, the Tomlinson recommendations are not adopted?

*Difficult to say at this stage. In my personal view we still have much to do in helping learners make progressive transitions from one age/stage of learning to another. And there is still much to play for. Work funded by the JISC and Lifelong Learning Networks will continue to plug away at this agenda, and we are working with Foundation Degree Forward to support the implementation of PDP within Foundation Degrees. Plus, young people who are working more within Increased Flexibility programmes within pre-HE settings are likely to arrive in HE having been required to manage their learning which will have taken place across different sites - schools, colleges, training providers. Time will tell what kind of impact such a different set of curriculum experiences will have on applicants.*

The Burgess Group acknowledges that there is a range of approaches to implementing PDP although its own scope was to raise issues rather than provide solutions. It recommends that we continue to evaluate the 'impact of learning and the representation of learning and achievement of different forms of PDP' [Recommendation 6]. What evaluation of PDP has there been already and how much do we know about the impact that PDP schemes are making?

*Again, this is a moving picture. Burgess, remember, scoped the issues; a second group is working out some ways*

*forward to try out on us, hopefully in the next few months. We've had a major activity to create a systematic map and synthesis review of the effectiveness of personal development planning for improving student learning (see [http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/EPPIWeb/home.aspx?page=/reel/review\\_groups/EPPI/LTSN/LTSN\\_intro.htm](http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/EPPIWeb/home.aspx?page=/reel/review_groups/EPPI/LTSN/LTSN_intro.htm)) which 'confirmed the central policy claim that PDP supports the improvement of students' academic learning and achievement'. At the other end of the spectrum we at CRA are collecting illustrations of practitioner research to include on our website. We're also aiming to include the tools and instruments they are using so others can make use of these. However, we're also conscious that the real impact of PDP may not show up until graduates are some little way into their careers, so an alumni survey would be a great next step.*

The Burgess Report explicitly addresses an international dimension to recording achievement but also recognises that there is a 'relative paucity of international research aimed at evaluating the impact of PDP' [para 47]. How much development work in PDP is being undertaken with an international focus?

*PDP is a uniquely UK piece of terminology. But, as HE is increasingly a global activity and the issues of supporting student development shared ones, we are both recognising comparable practice elsewhere (such as in the USA, see <http://www.aahe.org/electronicportfolios/>) and, in respect of the increasingly diverse range of students from across the world, we find it in our own programmes of study.*

Finally, a lot of development and evaluation of PDP schemes seems to have been undertaken at an undergraduate level; what do we know of work being done with postgraduates?

*We've done some work with UKGRAD to begin to map practice at Postgraduate level, details of which can be found at <http://www.recordingachievement.org/downloads/FINALUKGRADREPORT.pdf>. Plus, of course, the QAA code of practice for Postgraduate research students, and the Roberts funding for training and development are both potentially powerful ingredients here.*

And what does the evaluation of PDP within Foundation Degrees demonstrate where PDP is a requirement?

*Ask me again when we've finished our current work with Foundation Degree Forward! It's clearly an area rich with potential, and maybe also for rethinking, in terms of the role an employer might play alongside the student and academic mentor, for example.*

Rob, I would like to end by saying thank you for your responses and a big thank you for all the support that you and the CRA give to education developers with the task of developing and implementing PDP schemes in their own institutions.

*Thanks to you for the challenging questions...*

The HE Academy has been running consultation meetings to discuss the development of professional standards. Andrew Honeybone and Mike Tribe respond to the question: In the light of the Professional Standards consultation this spring, what are the issues that concern you most and where do we go from here?

# A Personal Reflection: on standards, frameworks and the individual

**Andrew Honeybone**, University of Cambridge

I came away from the HEA consultation seminar on professional standards in Birmingham in March with mixed feelings. I renewed acquaintance with old colleagues and met new ones. We had some very active discussions - stimulating, confusing, critical - and raised some interesting issues concerning the setting of professional standards. As an academic discussion, it was engaging; as an aid to decision making, I am not so sure. Neither of the models presented at the seminar (HEA, 2005a) received much support and the way forward did not seem very clear.

As I sat on the train going home, I engaged in a spot of reflection, as a good professional should, and tried to identify the particular issues that still seemed to be unresolved. I think they fall into three main groups: first, the meaning of a standards framework in the present context; second, the scope of those standards; and finally the issue of who should be responsible for setting the standards and in particular the role of the individual practitioner. Within the confines of this brief note, I will seek to address these issues mainly by referring back to the original consultation document (Universities UK et al, 2004) and the analysis of the responses to the consultation (Higher Education Academy, 2005b).

## The Meaning of a Standards Framework

What we mean by both 'standards' and 'framework' seems fundamental to the present debate. The original consultation document states that 'we see "standards" in this context as referring to nationally agreed statements of expectations for practice.' (Universities UK et al,

2004, paragraph 16). It then goes on to clarify that 'a "framework of standards" describes the totality of the statements covering practice that supports student learning.' However, if we look at the responses to the consultation, there is maybe a significant shift in emphasis: a preference is expressed for a framework 'comprising a small number of high order principles applied, as deemed appropriate, by each institution.' (HEA, 2005b paragraph 1.8). This suggests that 'the totality of the statements' mentioned in the consultation document are not all going to be made centrally. Reassurance on this was provided at the seminar when it was reported that the Government recognises the need for the framework to be developed by the HE sector itself rather than being an externally imposed competency-based system. It would be a joint enterprise between the HEA, taking the lead nationally, and the HEIs, not forgetting the individual practitioner (of whom more later). Therefore, perhaps what we should be talking about is not a nationally prescribed framework of standards but a national framework for standards that identifies the 'high order principles' to which individual institutions would relate their own individual more detailed statements. In other words, the framework for standards, as with other national statements such as the subject benchmarks, would provide 'points of reference' for individual institutions and practitioners, thus providing flexibility to cater for the diversity of provision across the sector. In line with another preference from the responses to the consultation (HEA, 2005b paragraphs 1.16 and 1.17), these principles or points of reference

could be based on statements (or descriptors) covering areas of activity, core knowledge and values similar to those used at present by the HEA for accrediting registered practitioners and courses (HEA, 2004 and 2005c).

## The Scope of the Standards

The original consultation document is entitled 'Towards a Framework of Professional Teaching Standards' (my emphasis) which seems clear enough but paragraph 1 then talks about 'the development of professional standards for academic practice and continuing professional development that will support teaching and learning in higher education', which, I would suggest is not the same thing; related yes, but not the same. The idea of the standards framework embracing 'the broader concept of academic practice rather than, more narrowly, learning and teaching' received strong support in the responses to the consultation (HEA, 2005b paragraph 1.13). If, to use the terminology of one quoted respondent who, as in the argument above, makes an important distinction between for and of, the issue is about professional standards for teaching rather than professional standards of teaching, then the standards can include reference to research at least in so far as research relates to teaching. And that, of course, leads us into another area of major debate: the nature of the relationship between research and teaching (see, for example, Jenkins, 2003) and one which could be strongly encouraged by the standards framework. At the very least, the area of professional activity 'integration of scholarship, research and professional activities with teaching and supporting learning' included in the present HEA application form (HEA, 2004) should

be retained and preferably placed in a more central position. In this way a more integrated form of professional development for academic practice as a whole might be encouraged.

### The Responsibility for Setting the Standards: the role of the individual practitioner

So far the focus of my discussion has been on the nature of the standards and the respective roles of the HEA and the institutions. Now let us turn to the practitioner. Traditionally in HE individual academics have taken responsibility for their own professional development with the emphasis firmly on updating their own disciplinary knowledge in general and their research interests in particular. Typically, such activity would be deeply and implicitly embedded in their academic practice without any perceived need to relate it to external frameworks. More recently, and in part through external influences, more academics have recognised the need for professional development in learning and teaching, frequently based on a reflective practitioner model (Schön, 1983) in which the emphasis is placed on the responsibility of individuals for their own development. How, then, does this existing, largely autonomous practice relate to national and institutional statements on professional

development? Within the confines of this brief reflection, I think I can only pose the question rather than answer it. But it is, I think, one that needs to be addressed. Otherwise there is the danger that, even with the best of intentions, the formalisation of a standards framework with an associated system of continuing professional development could be seen as taking responsibility away from the individual and failing to recognise adequately the academic's pride in maintaining standards which is the hallmark of the best of academic practice already. Using Land's terminology (Land, 2001), will the standards be seen as liberating rather than domesticating; as an aid to individual development or institutional control? Their success, I think, hangs on the answers to these questions.

### References

- Higher Education Academy (2004) *Individual Entry Route Application Form, UK*. HEA: [http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/documents/Individual\\_Entry\\_Route\\_Application.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/documents/Individual_Entry_Route_Application.pdf) [site accessed 22 April 2005].
- Higher Education Academy (2005a) *Proposals for national professional standards for supporting learning in higher education*. HEA: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/professionalstandards.htm> [site accessed 22 April 2005].
- Higher Education Academy (2005b) *Analysis of Responses to the Consultation – Executive Summary. Towards a Framework of Professional Teaching Standards*. HEA: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/2435.htm> [site accessed 22 April 2005].
- Higher Education Academy (2005c) *Guidelines on the Accreditation of Staff Development Programmes in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. HEA: [http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/regandaccr/Guidelines\\_for\\_HEIs.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/regandaccr/Guidelines_for_HEIs.pdf) [site accessed 22 April 2005].
- Jenkins, Alan (2003) 'Developing Teaching-Research Links. Perspectives and Resources', *Educational Developments* 4.1, 5-7.
- Land, R (2001) 'Agency, context and change in academic development', *International Journal of Academic Development* 6, 1, 4-20.
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner. How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Universities UK, et al (2004) *Towards a Framework of Professional Teaching Standards. A Universities UK/ SCOP/HEFCE/ Higher Education Academy Consultation*. London: UUK Briefing Service.

### Andrew Honeybone

Academic Development Consultant  
CAPCam Project  
Academic Staff Development  
University of Cambridge  
25 Trumpington Street  
Cambridge CB2 1QA  
Email: ah427@cam.ac.uk

## Copyright

Copyright for all published material is held by SEDA unless stated otherwise.

Contributors may use their material elsewhere after publication without permission, but the following note should be added: "First published in Educational Developments, issue number and date". Permission is required for use by a third party.

The publishers have endeavoured to find the copyright holders of all material in this magazine. If we have infringed copyright, we shall be pleased, on being satisfied as to the owner's title, to pay an appropriate fee as if prior permission had been obtained.

Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy in all published material. However, the Editorial Committee and the publishers cannot accept any liability for any inaccuracy accepted in good faith from reputable sources.

Any opinions expressed are those of the authors.

## 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 via email: [office@seda.ac.uk](mailto:office@seda.ac.uk)

# Professional Standards - models and issues

Dr Mike Tribe FIBiol, Council Member of The Higher Education Academy

## Precedent

The medical profession has had a Hippocratic oath governing the professional practice of doctors for hundreds of years, the modern version being written by Louis Lasagna in 1964. Similarly, many other professional organisations, such as the Institute of Biology and the Royal Society of Chemistry have incorporated into their Royal Charters the concept of a 'Chartered Practitioner' (one who is licensed to practice as a professional in their specific scientific field). More recently, these institutions have also thought it necessary to publish a code of conduct and ethical practice pertinent to the behaviour and integrity of their members. In all cases, before publishing such a code of conduct and ethical practice appropriate to *all* members, wide consultation was essential for acceptance and approval. However, even within these "subject-focused" organisations it was not easy to reach a consensus of agreement without producing a rather anodyne document.

## Background

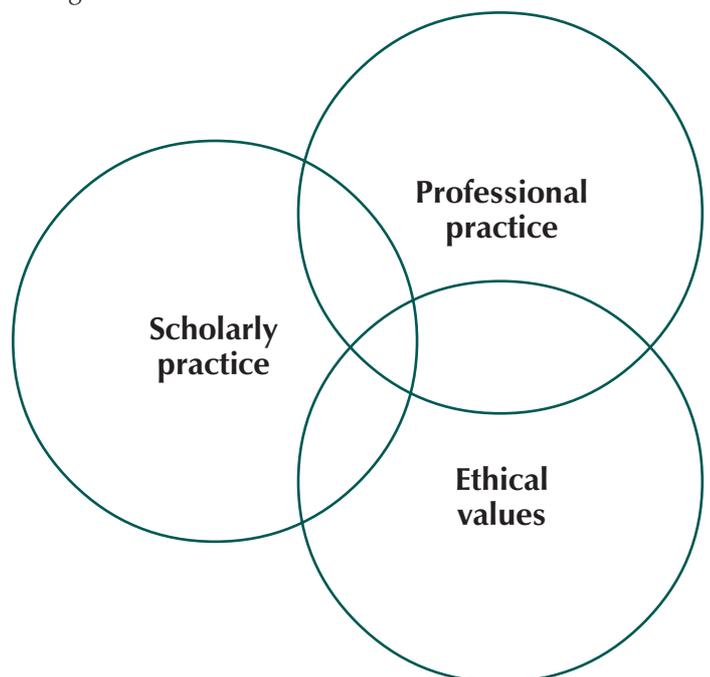
With the setting up of the Higher Education Academy in 2004, it was right and proper that it should attempt to establish, and eventually publish, a set of Professional Standards expected of the membership following wide consultation. So a consultation document *Towards a framework of professional teaching standards* was issued by UUK, the Standing Conference of Principals, and the HE Funding Councils following preliminary discussions with the HE Academy and an external stakeholder group. An analysis of responses to the consultation was first reported in October 2004 and updated in February 2005. Feedback from the first consultation document recommended a *single* framework that would be inclusive, simple, flexible, and geared to the needs of a range of national and regional institutions, organisations and colleagues. The framework should promote institutional engagement and include staff with a wide range of roles and responsibilities in support of student learning.

At the outset, it is important that we clearly distinguish between the function of the QAA and the imposition of professional standards by the HE Academy accreditation process. The experience and insight gained from time as a QAA Subject Specialist Reviewer was useful, and setting up the QAA in the early 1990s was an important step in redressing the balance between the quality of student provision and the emphasis given to subject-based research, particularly at older universities. Whilst peer review and external scrutiny in the maintenance of comparable standards are paramount to academic integrity, some academics believe that the system may be under threat from excessive accountability and bureaucracy (QAA and the RAE) by making it serve the interests of the "processors and facilitators" rather than the practitioners and students. Even the introduction of the

ILTHE and then the Academy did not immediately receive a warm reception from all practitioners within higher education. Some could not see the benefits to them as individuals of becoming members of the Institute or later the Academy, although HEIs and other organisations were more welcoming because it enabled them to meet their specific missions and strategies. It is against this background that publishing an acceptable single framework of Professional Standards, applicable to all staff across the whole higher education sector, could prove very difficult.

## Models and Issues arising

A series of one-day workshops were held at various locations throughout the UK, where two models were presented for discussion. Prior to discussion of the two models, delegates were advised that the framework should be based on professional values and not on detailed statements of competence. Furthermore, the framework of standards should be open to organisational ownership and its development supported by accreditation through the Academy. To generate opinions and questions about *Professionalism in Practice*, a Venn diagram of three equal sized circles attempted to show the relationships between 'Scholarly practice', 'Professional practice' and 'Ethical values', but was regarded as too simplistic from several perspectives: (1) the key components (circles) are not necessarily of equal size nor the degrees of overlap between components; (2) the diagram does not distinguish between extrinsic and intrinsic values, nor equal opportunity values; (3) the diagram does not really distinguish between the values of the individual and the responsibilities of institutions; and (4) the diagram does not indicate how development and change are facilitated.



**Model A**

(See <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/professionalstandards.htm>)

This model is less prescriptive and allows a greater sense of autonomy for individual institutions. It is not clear whether it also assumes the values expounded in Model B but, if not, then, as several delegates commented, “Keep the values of B and the flexibility of A”.

Model A lists 7 standards and invites capability statements in relation to each standard from individual universities, colleges and appropriate organisations, with mediation being maintained by the Academy’s accreditation process. This model has the virtue of building upon an accredited system already in existence between universities and colleges and what was the ILTHE. It is also subject to criticism, principally:

- How are standards going to be interpreted by different individuals and institutions?
- How does the HE Academy effectively implement this model, by the accreditation process alone?
- Model A may lack the portability of Model B.

**Model B**

This model is detailed, prescriptive and rather inflexible. It makes nine commitments to professional values that should be fully integrated into all areas of activity supporting student learning. It then goes on to list nine areas of activity with detailed standards expected in each case.

Statements about values and areas of activity are a positive feature of this model, and most practitioners would not disagree with them. Indeed this type of model, if acceptable, might have greater portability value, but the model itself is subject to a number of criticisms:

- How are standards interpreted and what are the acceptable thresholds?
- To what extent do these standards already exist, and if not who enforces them?
- A number of external examiner report forms already have ‘tick box’ sections. This model lends itself to a ‘tick box’ approach, which like the external examiners’ reports may not be all bad, but it also requires scope for reflection, comment and analysis, as do most report forms. This it appears to lack.
- The model may not meet the needs of the wider HE community, particularly overseas and part-time practitioners.
- Could new staff or indeed more experienced practitioners demonstrate all these values and standards? It is a tall order!
- Several delegates criticised the model for being rather one-dimensional, preferring a more 3-dimensional model (“spiral staircase model”) allowing more personal reflection, peer review, and comparison with others during career development.

**Where do we go from here?**

It will be interesting to know whether the views and criticisms of the London delegates were reflected in workshops countrywide. If so, getting agreement on a single framework of standards from such a wide-ranging membership may prove very difficult.

The main concerns are: (1) how to provide a single framework of standards without producing a rather anodyne document; (2) given that most practitioners and institutions want flexibility in implementing these standards, portability might become an issue; (3) how are the standards going to be interpreted by different institutions and individuals; and (4) how will these standards be effectively mediated and implemented by the Academy where its role is shown to be quite distinct from other bodies such as the QAA?

In conclusion, (1) In order to progress, dialogue is necessary between government, particularly HEFC, QAA, the Academy and HE institutions to establish clear roles for each. In all cases co-operation not competition should be encouraged.

(2) Many practitioners need to be convinced about the role and benefits of the Academy to them as individuals. Most already believe that they practice to a set of professional standards. Generating an interest in pedagogic research findings relevant to their teaching is likely to be best achieved through the LTSNs (now under the umbrella of the Academy) and educational groups within their own subject-specific professional bodies. Dropping the annual renewal fee for membership should help to recruit and retain a higher membership of the Academy.

(3) Staff Development Units within HE institutions and External Examiners are likely to have even more important roles in monitoring professional standards than previously. This could mean that External Examiners require more formal preparation and training for the job, in the same way that subject specialist reviewers receive special training from the QAA.

(4) Given that it might be unreasonable for new staff members to demonstrate all the standards laid down within the framework immediately, (as for example in Model B), then perhaps some kind of graded ‘membership’ might be appropriate, as with other professional bodies, where Associate, Graduate, Member and Fellow are progressively more difficult levels to achieve, reflecting as they do the standards achieved in professional career development.

(5) An anodyne document outlining a single framework of professional standards with greater flexibility given to all institutions, might incur portability problems for individuals moving between institutions. Interpretation may also be a problem, since some academics believe for example that some of the QAA subject benchmarks are ambiguous. However, if monitoring and mediation of the standards finally agreed are robust, then this may not be a serious issue.

**Dr Mike Tribe** is at the School of Chemistry, Physics and Environmental Science at the University of Sussex.

# The 10th Annual SEDA Conference



Advance date notice:

**Tuesday 29th - Wednesday 30th November 2005**  
**Novotel, Birmingham**

Further details will be included in Educational Developments, issue 6.3. Call for contributions information will be available from the SEDA website when finalised. - [www.seda.ac.uk](http://www.seda.ac.uk)

## Book Review

### **The Higher Education Manager's Handbook: effective leadership and management in universities and colleges;** **Peter McCaffery**

2004, RoutledgeFalmer, Oxon,  
ISBN 0-415-34120 – 5 hbk, 0-415-33507-8 pbk;  
322pps

*The Higher Education Manager's Handbook: effective leadership and management in universities and colleges* has not been written with educational developers in mind! Teaching, learning and assessment are referred to *en passim* as features of some other phenomena such as measuring the effectiveness of teaching or the need to become student-centred in order to respond to "public expectations of choice, service and quality" (p13). However, there are a number of reasons why this text is worth looking at. Firstly, one can find useful condensed summaries of many of the current leadership and management theories and analyses. Secondly, there is a good articulation of the difference between leadership and management and the different skills and values associated with each. This is likely to be useful to those educational developers who have engaged with leadership development. Thirdly, colleagues may be interested in Chapter Seven, *Managing Change*, where the author gives a first-hand account of what happened at Thames Valley University. Finally, a lot of material has been packed into this text so it is likely that most readers will find at least a snippet of useful material or something they had not thought about. (For example, "if you are unfortunate enough to have a truly noxious manager ..." McCaffery suggests, as a last resort, invoking the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 in the interests of the

institution – see HEFCE 01/20, 2001 *Guide for Members of Governing Bodies of Universities and Colleges in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*)

There are some weaknesses as well and a number of irritating bits. The text, overall, is uneven. The early chapters about the changing contexts of higher education management are discursive although the discussion sometimes is based on assertion rather than being evidence-based. The middle chapters on developing leadership and management skills are most useful with a number of practical guides. Chapter Six on *Developing Staff* is uneven. The chapter starts with a refreshing conclusion, evidence-based, that the concept of a "learning organisation" is one that has not been realised in practice. However, in the rest of the chapter McCaffery asks a lot of questions without always giving answers. In Chapter Eight, *Managing up and managing the 'down side'*, there is a good attempt at prescribing how to manage your boss and what to do if your boss is not very good. It includes the need and practice of building a power base including a model to assess how strong your current power base is. Indeed, the text contains many such models for self-assessment. The final chapter, *Managing yourself*, serves as a useful reminder that the effective leader and manager (and educational developer) needs to take care of themselves and includes several models to self-assess, including stress vulnerability and work/life balance. Overall, there is sufficient to include it on your department bookshelf but it can be irritating as well. Call me old fashioned but, for me, there are too many very long, compound sentences with sub-clauses and parentheses (and too many sentences that start with 'and').

**Steve Outram**  
The Higher Education Academy

# Teaching and Research: The Tables Turned

**Helen Sword**, University of Auckland

Imagine, if you can, an academic universe in which the roles of teaching and research have been suddenly and magically reversed.

Scholars emerge from the library or laboratory and heave a sigh of relief: "Thank goodness I've finished all my research for this year! Now I can get on with my real work!" Rushing back to the classroom, they throw themselves with relish into the job they have trained to do through years of postgraduate study, the labour for which they are recognised and rewarded by their peers and their institutions: the "real work" of teaching.

Committed research scholars, meanwhile, profess frustration at the inequities of the system, but their complaints fall on deaf ears. Indeed, their excessive attention to research is secretly regarded by their peers as

a sign of intellectual deficiency. "If so-and-so were a truly talented teacher," colleagues mutter to one another at cocktail parties, "s/he wouldn't waste so much time and energy on research." Newly hired academics keen to pursue cutting-edge research methodologies are actively discouraged by their Heads of Department, who urge them to focus on their teaching instead: "You have to think about your career, you know!"

When asked by administrators and promotion committees to develop measures for demonstrating research competence, academic staff rise up in anger. "How can anyone really measure or evaluate good research?" they demand. "Research is a private matter, a matter of personal style." These same scholars have no qualms, needless to say, about subjecting their teaching to collegial

scrutiny and rigorous peer review. Indeed, they love to fly off to far-flung conferences where they can engage in lively disciplinary debates with teaching colleagues from around the world, leaving behind the drudgery of their research obligations.

Top universities maintain their international stature by offering generous funding for innovative teachers, with additional support from government and industry sources. Academic units devoted to the promotion of research excellence, by contrast, remain consistently under-funded and under-staffed. University administrators do pay a certain amount of lip service to the importance of supporting stellar researchers but under their breaths, they all recite the same mantra: "This is a teaching-led university!"

**Helen Sword** is Educational Development Consultant at the Centre for Professional Development, University of Auckland. [h.sword@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:h.sword@auckland.ac.nz)

## An introduction to SEDA's latest Committee Co-Chairs

### **Papers Committee: Philip Frame and Mark Schofield**

Philip is a National Teaching Fellow and Principal Lecturer in Organisational Development at Middlesex University Business School.

Mark is Head of Teaching and Learning Development and a Reader in Educational Development at Edge Hill. He is chair of the Edge Hill Centre for Learning and Teaching research and Academic Director of the SOLSTICE CETL (Supported Online Learning for Students using Technology for Information and Communication in their Education). His current research interests include student induction and academic writing, enquiry-based learning and deployment of technologies to assist learning.

### **Fellowships Committee: Mike Cook FSEDA and Peter Kahn FSEDA**

Mike is Staff Development Manager at the University of Lincoln and has a background in the use of open learning within Higher Education and maintains a particular interest in action learning, appraisal and staff induction within universities.

Peter is Senior Professional Development Adviser at the University of Manchester, Teaching Learning and Assessment Office and is also involved in directing a PG Cert in Learning and Teaching in HE, promoting professional development for teaching and learning.

Coming  
Soon

## Peer Observation of Teaching SEDA PAPER 118

ISBN: 1-902435-31-1

For further information on this and other publications, please contact the SEDA Office: [office@seda.ac.uk](mailto:office@seda.ac.uk) or visit the SEDA website:

[www.seda.ac.uk](http://www.seda.ac.uk)