

the New Academic

The Magazine of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Spring 1995 • Vol. 4 No. 1

The Art of Lecturing

Hunters and
Gatherers in
the Tribes of
Academe

A Guide to
Quality Issues

The British
Education
Index

David Jaques
7 Stanley Road
Oxford OX4 1QY
01865 203255
Mobile 07778 646728
davidjaques3@mac.com

SEDA

The Staff and Educational
Development Association,
Gala House, 3 Raglan Road,
Edgbaston, Birmingham B5 7RA.
tel: 0121-440-5021
fax: 0121-440-5022

SEDA is the principal organisation in the UK for the promotion of innovation and good practice in teaching and learning in higher education. It was formed in 1993 through a merger between SCED (Standing Conference on Educational Development) and the Staff Development Group of SRHE (Society for Research into Higher Education).

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tel: 01840-770220,
fax: 01840-770518.

Information for Contributors

The Editor welcomes all material which might be of interest to teachers in higher education: the purpose of *The New Academic* is to promote good practice in teaching and better understanding of the processes involved in learning in all areas of higher education.

Audience is drawn from educators in all fields and disciplines. You should therefore not assume specialised knowledge, but write clear, straightforward accounts in plain English. When describing projects, please give concrete detail. Papers accepted for publication may be subject to editing.

All material should be submitted in three copies, typewritten on single side of A4, double-spaced. Submission of a paper to *The New Academic* implies that it has not been published elsewhere and that it is not currently being considered for publication by any other editor or publisher.

Everyone involved with *The New Academic* works on it only part of the time, and so delays in dealing with submissions are inevitable. All papers will be reviewed by at least two people, and expert advice sought where appropriate. If you wish prompt acknowledgement, please enclose stamped addressed envelope. To speed production, the Editor would appreciate receiving finalised material on floppy disc (PC or Acorn) in Wordperfect or ASCII, where possible.

Articles

These should be between 800 and 2000 words. References should be kept to a minimum; where necessary, author's name should be given with date in brackets in text, for example Thatcher (1992). Reference list should be in alphabetical order, in standard academic style: e.g.

Thatcher, M. (1992). How I turned back the tide,
Journal of Marine Studies, 14, 123-45.

Thatcher, M. (1992). **Lessons for Canute**. Portsmouth:
Celebrity Press.

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Book reviews

All material to be sent to Book Reviews Editor, who will give guidance: 200 to 400 words. For presentation, please see Books section.

Conference reports

Reports on all conferences of relevance to teachers in higher education are welcome: 200 to 500 words, with concrete detail of interesting papers given. For style of presentation, please see Reports section.

News

Events, decisions, discoveries, people: items of interest to teachers in higher education should be sent to the Editor. Notional deadlines: Spring, 15 January; Summer, 14 April; Autumn, 15 September.

Acronyms used in The New Academic

- APEL Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning
- BTEC Business and Technical Education Council
- CAT Credit Accumulation and Transfer
- CNAA Council for National Academic Awards
- HE Higher Education
- HEQC Higher Education Quality Council
- HMI Her Majesty's Inspectorate
- HND Higher National Diploma
- NVQ National Vocational Qualification
- PCFC Polytechnics & Colleges Funding Council
- SRHE Society for Research in Higher Education
- THES Times Higher Education Supplement

The list will be added to as appropriate.

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Editor:

Dr Elizabeth Mapstone,
St Yse, Trethevy,
Tintagel, Cornwall, PL34 OBE.
tel: 01840-770220
fax: 01840-770518

Book Reviews Editor:

Dr P.T. Knight,
Department of
Educational Research,
Lancaster University.

Editorial Board:

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SEDA,

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Edgbaston, Birmingham B5 7RA.
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the New Academic

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SEDA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Modularity and Semesters

"New Challenges and Building on Experience"

11 to 13 May 1995

University of Luton

Putteridge Bury Conference Centre

Conference themes

- * Student choice and modularisation
- * Academic counselling and guidance
- * Independent learning
- * Curriculum delivery and assessment
- * Student support and progression
- * Peer group relations
- * Role of academic-related staff
- * Employment and employers

An important conference for senior managers, modular scheme coordinators, staff responsible for design, delivery and assessment of modules, academic counsellors, learning resources and computer centre staff.

Workshops and shorter seminar presentations on these themes are still invited.

Keynote speakers

David Robertson

*Professor of Public Policy
John Moores University, Liverpool*

David Watson

*Director,
University of Brighton*

Norman Evans

*Visiting Professor
Anglia Polytechnic University
Founder and Trustee, Learning from Experience Trust*

Sue Otter

*Advisor
Department of Employment*

William Craft

*Vice-President,
Planning and Economic Development
Bunker Hill Community College,
Boston, USA*

For further details, please contact:

*Jill Brookes, SEDA Administrator,
Gala House, 3 Raglan Road,
Birmingham, B5 7RA.
tel: 0120 440 5021
fax: 0120 440 5022*



STAFF AND EDUCATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

View from the New Chair

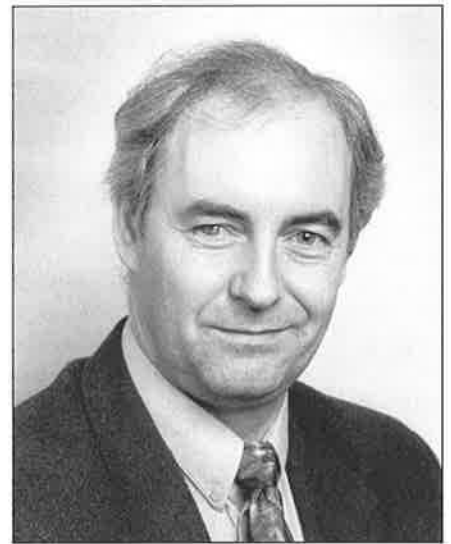
It took me over seven weeks to find the time to write this editorial. I am presently some 29,000 feet above the Irish Sea, returning from an Editorial Board meeting – my first as Chair – and the Editor needs this editorial by tomorrow at the latest. So what took me so long? Why do I need to rely on “air time” for this kind of activity? The meeting had a packed agenda, concentrating on how to maintain, if not enhance the quality of the magazine with fewer resources, mostly time and people; we certainly have no money to work with. But we have an obligation to produce a quality magazine for an increasing number of customers from diverse backgrounds.

Does this all sound familiar to you? I believe the work of the Editorial Board is some kind of metaphor for the work of academic staff in HE within the UK and throughout the world.

We are all required to “do more with less”

and to maintain quality in our work against a background of competing demands on our resources and time. We have to find different ways of delivering our service – and our work is being evaluated by our peers. We would all appreciate ideas on how to do it better or even more efficiently and we don't have the time to experiment or innovate ourselves. I remember receiving advice as a Lecturer in Engineering some years ago “Never be first to do something, it's too painful. Much better to be second!”

So the main focus of *The New Academic* magazine is to try to provide articles which discuss different ways of teaching or helping students to learn – not pious or philosophical articles, but practical case studies of alternative teaching, learning and assessment methods which have been developed, tried and tested by our peers, innovations designed to overcome identified generic difficulties; honest case studies which evaluate the work.



Ivan Moore

Some articles will concentrate on teaching and learning methods, others will be subject specific, but chosen for their potential transferability to other disciplines. Of course, we will provide a mix of articles which discuss other issues: quality assurance; research; the student experience; counselling; careers; and we will always aim to be topical and even controversial. We certainly intend to provide a very readable and useful magazine. We hope you enjoy it!

Continued Renewal

We are now beginning the fourth year of *The New Academic*, with a new look, a new publishing schedule, and a new Chair of the Editorial Board. Before we move joyously on into that brave new world, I should like to pay tribute to David Jaques, the retiring Chair: without him, *The New Academic* would probably not have come into existence. His vision and enthusiasm and sheer hard work turned a great idea into practical reality. Fortunately he remains an active member of the Board, but I could not let this moment pass without saying, “Thank you, David, for all that you have done to make *The New Academic* a success, and for inviting me to join the team.”

Many readers will have noticed the absence of their “magazine of teaching and learning in HE” last term. This is because the publishing schedule has been revised to coincide with SEDA's subscription year. One copy will continue to appear each academic term, and volume 4 begins now.

We have now accumulated some excellent

articles for this and future issues. The cover story is a two-part series by Trevor Habeshaw, giving practical tips to all teachers who have to cope with large numbers of students. Many writers criticise lecturing as old hat and ineffective, and yet frequently teachers have little choice. Habeshaw shows how to turn necessity into a positive benefit. Another tip comes from America: Edward Nuhfer explains how to get students on your side by creating “management teams”.

Variety is the keynote in this issue. Julienne Hanson suggests an illuminating way of viewing the current gender imbalance in senior appointments by applying concepts from anthropology (see page 12). A useful guide to quality issues is provided by Jennifer Rowley, and Joanna Smailes offers practical tips on evaluating and improving your students' mathematical understanding. Several writers show how they have incorporated careers education in the curriculum; we have information about the British Education Index; book reviews; and the last word is given

to John Tyerman Williams, who reveals the inspiration to be found in Winnie the Pooh.

Inspiration, practical suggestions, new approaches: surely something for everyone!



Elizabeth Mapstone

NEWS and COMMENTS

HE SEMINAR IN SOUTH AFRICA

"Transformation in HE" will be the focus of a second International Educational Development Seminar in the new South Africa this April. Hosted by the University of Stellenbosch, the seminar will contribute to the work of the Commission on HE recently set up by the Mandela Government.

Key South African speakers will include the Chairs of the Commission of Enquiry and the Committee of University Principals: there will also be an international panel. The meeting will examine a variety of ways in which HE can be adapted to the needs of a rapidly changing society, including questions of access, mobility, cultural variety, curriculum design, and staff and student development. The seminar will have a strong Action Learning dimension, but contributed papers and workshops from international participants will be welcome.

Venue: Breakwater Lodge conference centre on Cape Town's historic waterfront. Dates: 10 to 13 April, 1995.

Further details: Chris de Winter Hebron at H+E Associates, phone 0328 830355, fax 0328 830339.

WOMEN'S NETWORK

"Dealing with Difficult Bosses" was the theme of a successful meeting at the SEDA Conference in Worthing in November. Bullying turned out to be a surprisingly common experience in the group, and a range of mechanisms were suggested to deal with such problems. Sally Brown, the convenor, reports though that it was reassuring to find that many women felt comfortable with the bosses they have, and able to air difficult matters in relatively non-confrontational ways.

"What we all seemed to find valuable," she writes, "was that we had made a space for ourselves where we could examine gender issues in an environment that was sensitive and supportive. We also had a great deal of fun, as laughter is a great diffuser of conflict."

"Promotional Practices for Women" will be the topic of the Spring meeting of the SEDA Women's Network. It will be hosted by Andrea Kupferman-Hall at the HEQC in central London, but already history by the time this issue comes out. The next meeting will be in Sheffield in the Summer, and will be hosted by Linda Hurscome.

All women in HE are welcome. Further details from Vaneeta D'andrea, Roehampton Institute, Southlands Campus, Wimbledon Parkside, SW19 5NN.

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

What is the future for HE given the current climate in the schools of England and Wales with their assessment-led curricula and interventionist central policy agencies? how will

these developments progress into HE and is this desirable? is this approach capable of promoting deep learning? what is the future of "knowledge"? These were some of the questions considered at last summer's SEDA conference in Telford, by key speakers and in workshops.

Phil Race, Professor at University of Glamorgan, highlighted the mismatch between assessment and how people learn. Students learn the "assessment game", and student life is driven by assessment, and not by learning. As with other speakers his theme was "measure less but better", and through his interactive participatory style he reminded the audience that the principles of assessment should be to promote learning, not forgetting the "fun" angle.

Again, David Boud, Professor of Adult Education at the University of Technology, Sydney, and currently Visiting Professor at Warwick University, argued for "better" assessment practices than those which presently undermine learning and control students.

The language of assessment is important, for assessment should be a dialogue between staff and students. Prof. Boud identified "final say judgemental language" as "abusive language" concerned with the product not the process, for example "good", "rigorous", "not clear". These judgements communicate no substance, nor do they engage with the students' arguments or learning. Furthermore Boud suggests that judgemental language gives the impression of quality without real learning taking place.

It was to the development of NVQs at higher levels and the introduction of General NVQs to HE that Dr Madeleine Atkins, Head of the School of Education, University of Newcastle, turned. In essence the concept of knowledge and the role of HE in the future was raised. Is HE to be a main creator and definer of "new" knowledge? Does it matter what students learn? Is HE still to be concerned with "understanding"? With the quango-directed developments of vocational qualifications, knowledge for practical skill application is the main concern. If the new purpose of HE is to develop "transferable" skills, then universities are not the best or cheapest place to deliver this role.

More disturbing, Dr Atkins argued, is that there is little evidence of "transfer", and there is evidence of the impoverished gap between students "knowing" and "understanding" from such programmes. My own experience of working with staff and students in Further and Higher Education developing

these vocational programmes is similar and supports this view.

Dr Atkins opened an important debate about the role and purpose of HE, and the place of assessment for learning within this in the future. The debate should continue, with colleagues and students, from the minutiae to the broad perspectives. How can we develop and promote assessment for learning? Is there more to HE than "enterprise" development? At what cost do we go down this road? Is a purpose of HE to provide a general education experience of intrinsic worth?

*Gill Bradley,
School of Education, Nene College*

RESEARCHERS' NETWORK

A new network for researchers in Educational Development was created last November: the SEDA Postgraduate Network. Postgraduate students and research assistants are invited to share specialist research interests, provide mutual support and gain advice and information.

Coordinator is Jacqueline Davies at the Enterprise Learning Initiative, De Montfort University, Leicester (tel: 0116-257-7254).

LEARNING FROM PRIMARY TEACHERS

I have come across the High/scope system used with children in primary schools, and believe it is a valuable tool. The principles of 'Plan-Do-Review' are sound, and are used successfully to enable pupils to accept responsibility for their own work.

I am also involved in the field of NVQs, and find similarities in NVQ philosophy, which requires the candidates to accept responsibility for their own progress and assessment. Secondary and further education students encounter this same philosophy as they undertake GNVQs.

Children who work through the High/scope system should be able to cope more readily with the demands of NVQ and GNVQ if their earlier experience has been continued throughout the 11-14 years at secondary schools. And what of those who have never come across High/scope? It may be worth consideration that their 11-14 years could be used to begin the process which will culminate in dealing easily with 'Action Planning', 'Review Sheets', 'Assessment Plans' etc. that will form the structure of GNVQs and NVQs in their post-14 education and training.

I suggest this is an issue which colleagues concerned with training teachers for secondary and further education need to consider.

*Brenda Prescott,
Senior Lecturer, School of Education,
University of Sunderland.*

The Art of Lecturing 1

Trevor Habeshaw discusses the difficulties of coping with ever larger classes, and provides tips and insights into the art of making the lecture an effective teaching and learning tool. This is the first of a two-part series.

One of the odd things about talking to academics about lectures is that they usually know what they are going to hear, namely that what Donald Bligh¹ said in 1974 still holds true. Formal lectures may help students to remember specific facts and to organise these facts so as to make sense of them, though they are no more effective than many common teaching methods. Indeed, experiments have shown that other teaching and learning methods (including independent reading) are more effective in helping students apply known concepts to solving problems in new situations, analyse information into its constituent parts, put information together in new ways, and make critical judgments - in fact the kinds of learning we expect in a university education.

And yet the mode of teaching in most universities remains the lecture, usually in association with the seminar or tutorial. Twenty years ago I asked one teacher what the difference was between a lecture and a tutorial. His reply was, "In a lecture I talk to 60; in a tutorial I talk to 6." He wasn't being ironic. He had no idea of the potential value of a well-run tutorial. He was, however, betraying the fact that had he been a golfer rather than a university teacher he would have had only one club in his bag to drive, chip and putt with.

You can tell from the figures that this is an old story and today the relative figures are probably 200 and 20. Many would say that the problem has been aggravated by larger numbers and under-resourcing, and Bligh's rather depressing conclusion that teachers use the lecture method when discussion, private reading, and so on would be equally or more effective still holds true.

The time has surely come when, if we are to increase the use of large lectures we need to ensure that we make them as effective as possible. We should, where possible, modify them so that more meaningful learning, consistent with the higher order aims identified above, can be more effectively achieved.

The question of what "large" means is not

straightforward. In this paper I take large to be 150 plus, but I am aware that it depends on the context and the point of view of the individual teacher or student. If either think they are in a large class, they will act accordingly. One professor I spoke to in Cambridge University spoke of proposed future tutorial groups of 4 (albeit an increase of 100% on the previous year) as being the end of the world as she knew it.

MAKING A START

This should not be too difficult on the face of it since we know what makes for effective undergraduate education².

Good practice in undergraduate education...

- encourages student-teacher contact
- encourages cooperation among students
- encourages active learning
- gives prompt feedback
- emphasises time on task
- communicates high expectations
- respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

Figure 1

Arthur Chickering and his researchers have identified these seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education based on their analysis of 50 years' research in universities on the way teachers teach, how students learn, how students work and play co-operatively, and how students and teachers talk to each other². We could review our teaching generally, and our lectures in particular, to include as many of these principles listed in Figure 1.

The usual problems of attention and interest are aggravated in large lectures and they make the management of the process more important. Attention, for example, becomes even more difficult to maintain, and forgetting course material after the lecture develops into a more serious problem. Not knowing where you are or what is going on is at best upsetting for students. More

Ways of making your lecture more effective³

- 1 Structure the process of the lecture as a presentation carefully, by setting ground rules, briefing, orientation, flagging etc.
- 2 Structure and summarise the content, by stating aims and objectives, structuring and displaying the material e.g. as a pattern, sequentially etc., repeating important things etc.
- 3 Help your students to get better notes, by indicating important things, looking at and giving them feedback on their notes, getting them to swap notes, reviewing etc.
- 4 Use handouts creatively, by summarising the theme of the work, diagrams, articles, uncompleted handouts, reading guides etc.
- 5 Make connections with other parts of the course, by giving them the programme, giving a theme lecture, linking last week, this week and next week, giving helpful references, etc.
- 6 Alter the form occasionally to keep their attention by giving mini-lectures, introducing breaks, demonstrations, using audiovisual aids etc.
- 7 Get students actively engaged with the material, by using buzz groups, problem groups, pyramids etc.
- 8 Check up on their learning in your lectures, by asking questions, using Instant Questionnaires, testing at the start and at the end etc.

Figure 2

seriously it can result in boredom and, in some extreme cases, in unacceptable behaviour. It is certainly in the interests of teachers to try to forestall these problems and fortunately this can usually be achieved by paying more attention to the design of the lecture.

STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITY

Notwithstanding a larger, more diverse groups of students, the formal (expository) lecture can be substantially improved. Ways of adding structure are listed in Figure 2.



Changes are more likely to produce effective learning if

- built on previous experience of successful innovation for those involved
- introduced in a positive environment for change
- openly supported by 'leaders', and their ownership is shared by staff and students

AND IF THEY ARE

- carefully planned and explained
- introduced early in the students' tertiary career
- introduced slowly; involve induction, training and support for those involved
- "owned" by staff and students
- visibly beneficial to both staff and students
- subject to periodic review

Figure 3

A second strategy, and one which specifically addresses some of the major management problems of large groups, is to modify the formal lecture to make it more varied and active. One caveat is essential. Most students know what to expect when they go into the lecture room and they do not respond well to surprise changes. However, we know quite a bit about how to introduce change successfully into systems. Figure 3 lists some general principles for implementing change.

If novelty is worrying (for teachers and learners alike), more can be said about preparing your students for the changes you are about to implement. Teachers who build "ice-breakers" into their sessions make it easier for students to feel relaxed and

Before students start on a new learning experience, you must tell them...

- the rationale for what they are about to do
- clearly what you want them to do: the larger the class, the longer it takes to give instructions
- why you are asking them to do this
- how much time they have: the larger the working group the more time they'll need.
- what the outcome will be
- how you will signal to them while they are working, i.e. to watch or listen for the signal you will use to close the activity

For teachers new to the ideas which follow,

- start where you can
- start with a change that doesn't feel too risky
- get yourself a support group (one other person is enough)
- start thinking about longer term change
- document the change in some way
- collect evaluation evidence.

Figure 4

comfortable with each other, and greatly increase the chance of improved learner communication'. Briefing, conducted patiently and sensitively, is essential. This takes time and short-cuts at this stage are not a winning strategy. Not all teachers are good briefers so it is worthwhile having a run through the items in Figure 4 with a friend, colleague, or member of your educational development unit, before you go live as it were.

INTERESTING ACTIVITIES

Examples of interesting activities to build into your lectures can be found in Figure 5. These are ideas and scripts that you can adapt and use in your own area, either singly or in combination, but do not spend too much time on one thing. The purpose of these changes is to get the students actively engaged in learning both in lectures and outside them.

The activities work best if they are varied in format and process and if they are interesting and open-ended but capable of being completed and, where appropriate, discussed in a few minutes. Each activity listed is useful in two general ways, first to maintain students' attention and involvement in the lecture and second to serve as a model for how they might work when they are studying alone.

MANAGING QUESTIONS

Students do not usually ask spontaneous questions in large groups, mainly because they do not want others to think they are stupid, and teachers do not usually ask them because they lack confidence in themselves and in their students. There are ways of eliciting and answering questions without the pain which normally accompanies this exercise. Once again, preparation is necessary.

Students are more likely to answer (and to answer well) questions which are clear and explicit, when they have been given time to prepare what they have to say, and if they have been encouraged to work collaboratively on the answer with their neighbour before they give voice. Applying a bit of personal power

ACTIVITIES

● Take a break

It may seem odd to describe a break as an activity but there are benefits to be had from breaks:

a) Rest

In cramped conditions or after a long time, a rest is helpful, especially if people can move, stretch etc. Say, OK, take a break for one minute. Move around if you want to.

b) Quiet time

Properly briefed, students can use quiet time for reflection, to read over their notes to make sure they understand what they have written and, where necessary, check things out with their neighbour (by reading each other's notes) to fill in any gaps. Say, OK, let's have 3 minutes of quiet time. Take time to think about what we have been doing so far. You can read through your notes to make sure you understand them, fill in any gaps ...etc. And then, I'll tell you when there's a minute to go before we start again.

● Write down a question, either on your own or in pairs

Say I'd like you to write down at least two questions you have at this point in the lecture. Get the question exactly right so it addresses what you are really interested in or confused about. You have 3 minutes.

● Ask your question

Say, Take the questions you have written down and ask them of people all around you until you have satisfactory answers. You have 3 minutes.

● Do a calculation

Say OK, now do this one. You have got five minutes. Check it out with the person next to you when you finish. Ask them if you get stuck, but not until they have finished. We'll see how far you get in 5 minutes.

● Tackle a problem

As above or say, Write down the stages of how you would go about tackling this problem.

● Read something

Say, Read this poem, text, case, account on

the handout. You have 3/5/7 minutes.

Discuss a question in pairs, threes, fours etc.

● Apply a concept

Say, Analyse the poem, text, case, account using the concepts I have described. You have 5 minutes.

● Take a short test

Say, Here are three questions. Do them on your own for 5 minutes, then you will swap them with your neighbour to read for 2 minutes. I will explain any answers and you will peer mark your neighbour's paper and then pass it back.

● Planning

Say, Take 2 minutes to plan out what further work you need to do, what you need to read, try out or get practice on for this topic.

● Work on an uncompleted handout

Say, Now we've done the first three cells of the diagram, see if you can fill the rest in by yourself. You have five minutes.

● Draw/complete a diagram

Say, Spend two minutes labelling up this diagram without looking at last week's to start off with. We'll check back later to see if you're right.

Figure 5

helps. If you can create an environment which makes it clear that you expect an answer, you are more likely to get one. If you answer your questions yourself, you're sunk. For the courageous, other solutions to this problem are to be found in Gibbs⁵.

QUALITY OF STUDENT NOTES

Students have a lot of trouble taking good notes in large lectures for a variety of environmental, acoustic and social psychological reasons. More structure in your lecture in the ways mentioned earlier will help students to produce notes which are fuller and more accurate, while creativity and appropriate variety in handout design e.g. lecture outlines, uncompleted handouts, lecture transcripts, key diagrams and short learning tasks to be completed in the lecture, will help greatly.

Managing the distribution of this material can be problematic and you will need to arrange for either prior distribution of handouts, or make the handouts available to students on entry to the room, or organise students in various ways, e.g. as "handout monitors", when distribution of papers during the lecture is required.

FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS

Most of the regular methods of getting feedback on student learning and keeping in touch with them as an audience are not available to you in large lectures, especially if you want quick feedback which is not going to take too long to collect and read.

Suggestions in Gibbs range from the apparently juvenile ("Put your hand up if you want another example of this process") to the avowedly high-tech involving the use of computer-marked questionnaires on specially printed sheets, which are processed through an optical mark reader. Since feedback is critical to knowing how well the students are understanding the material, teachers will

want to use one or more of these methods from time to time.

Perhaps the most satisfactory immediate method is the Instant Questionnaire, presented here in more detail. Provided you trust your students' judgement (and if you are using questionnaires as feedback rather than as assessment there is no reason why you should not), the Instant Questionnaire offers a very quick way of getting feedback compared with tests, which can be time-consuming to design and check through.

The questionnaire is written on an overhead projector transparency containing just a small number of statements, for example:

- I understand the lecture content.
- I have encountered this material before.
- My lecture notes are incomplete and probably inaccurate.
- The pace is a bit slow.
- I have questions to which I need to have answers.
- Paying attention through the whole lecture is a real struggle.

This transparency can be written during the lecture itself, during a Quiet Time, for example, so you can match your statements very closely to your current concerns about how that particular lecture has gone. You do not need to plan this in advance at all and do not need to type or print anything.

In our example, students respond by taking a sheet of their own paper and writing down the numbers of the statements above. Next to them they write A, B, ... etc. using the rating scale in figure 6 which you also have on an OHP transparency:

- A** Always true for me
- B** Often true for me
- C** Sometimes true for me
- D** Seldom true for me
- E** Not true for me

Figure 6.

The students hand their sheets in at the end of the lecture as they leave, and you collate the data. If you like, you can also add the open-ended questions: "What would you like to understand more fully?" and "What aspects of this lecture would you like to spend more time on?" to pick up any other information which your chosen statements failed to cover.

Once students are used to giving you feedback like this you needn't remind them of the five-point rating scale, or even use an overhead projector transparency to display the statements. You can just say, "OK, time for instant feedback!" and read out your statements. The instant questionnaire should be used only for gaining feedback on student learning of the content of the lecture, and not for evaluating your course. The usual rules for formulating good statements are given in Figure 7.

Rules for good statements:

- Avoid ambiguity.
- Avoid double statements such as "I could list the advantages and disadvantages of this process".
- Mix positive and negative statements and those which are likely to elicit "yes" and "no" to avoid biasing responses.
- Avoid exaggerated statements which encourage the student to make a misleading response: "I can remember absolutely nothing whatsoever about entropy."
- Use statements about behaviour such as "I could list . . ." "I could explain . . ." which produce responses which are easier to interpret than statements about thoughts such as "I understand . . ." "I know . . ."

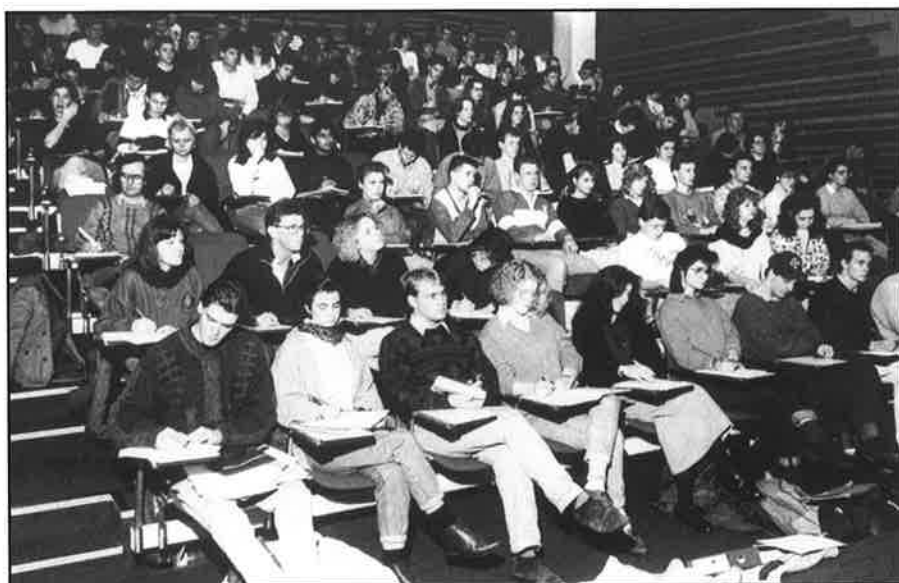
Figure 7

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Dr Habeshaw is an Educational Consultant and a Chartered Psychologist.

The second part of this paper will appear in our next issue, and will deal with the diverse needs of students in large classes.



Students as Colleagues

Edward B. Nuhfer presents the Case for Student Management Teams, and emphasises the responsibility that goes with empowerment.

The applicability of group dynamics to formal learning was long-recognised by a few educators, but only recently has the concept become a major force in higher education under the labels of "cooperative" and "collaborative" learning. This timing is coincident with college administrators' widespread consideration of some form of team-based "Total Quality Management" (TQM), about two decades after American businesses accepted the legitimacy of a system of management executed by teams composed of employees representing many hierarchical levels - from management through labor. The teams were empowered to make decisions and were assigned responsibility for constant, creative improvement. This departure from the traditional, boss-managed system has been credited largely to Edward Deming, who dubbed the teams "quality control circles". The new management philosophy gained credibility as team-based management systems generally out-competed those that were boss-managed. Success in competition was ultimately measured by how customers voted with their pocket-books, so customer satisfaction became a primary concern of contemporary management.

Absurdity may result when any management model is abused. The student government of a large Mid-Western state system argued that because students were customers and may choose or refuse products (classes), mandatory class attendance policies were an infringement on "customer rights" and should therefore be struck down. (The effort failed.) The students unwittingly promoted poor preparation of graduates produced by slipshod class attendance at the same time they decried poor preparation caused by shoddy teaching. When well-meaning college administrators label students as "customers" or "products", they encourage similar abuses by de-emphasizing student responsibility.

In contrast, the student management team model defines students as colleagues, and stresses student responsibility coincident with

any empowerment. Each student is also vested with primary responsibility for his or her educational experience. The customer is the general public (including all members of the university community), the product is education, and success manifests in the quality of the classroom as a teaching and learning community.

THE TEAM

Student management teams are a group partnership between students and professors that are formed for the purpose of improving the classroom community. The teams consist of about four students plus the professor, all from the same classroom. Forming a team must be voluntary on the part of the instructor. Student members have an assigned managerial role and assume a part of the responsibility for the success of the class. The students meet weekly to monitor progress and discuss how quality can be improved further. The professor attends every other week. All meetings are held in a neutral area away from the classroom or the professor's office. A written log of suggestions and progress is maintained, and the log goes to the professor at the end of the course. Meetings follow the relaxed structure of quality circles that is designed to make use of the contributions of all members. Providing student members with some sort of compensation for their time confirms that their effort is valued and that an institution or department is concerned enough with teaching improvement to devote some of its scarce resources to support it. In practice, however, many students are glad to volunteer.

Out of about 90 student management teams I have studied, about 7% produce weak returns and 2% were outright failures. Weak results usually stem from not identifying and recruiting at least one member with enthusiasm and commitment; failures result when one or more members lack the social skills required to work with others without hostility.

THE ROLE OF TEAMS

Student management teams can improve the classroom environment by considering: (1) how the course may be improved (sequence of material presented, designating areas of students' difficulty, terminating students' misconceptions, considering strengths and alternatives to the textbook, preventing absenteeism, dealing with irritating behaviours by consensus, and preventing observed problems with more effective syllabi) or (2) by considering (with the professor's permission) how the delivery of material might be improved. (A professor might bring in key aspects of last semester's evaluations that are troubling and ask the team for solutions. The professor can also suggest the team do two-minute paper surveys of the class on a regular basis, compile the results, and make recommendations.)

Professors may design teams for specific reasons. One engineering professor who wished to know about the attrition of women from engineering drafted a team consisting of four undergraduate women from different engineering areas. He learned that the women students felt the college atmosphere was "cold"; they needed more encouragement and positive recognition. A foreign professor in business who has low class ratings because of his thick accent asked his team to help him with communication. The team helped with pronunciation, encouraged use of more overhead transparencies and hand-outs of lecture outlines, and called attention during class to terms that were difficult to understand so that they could be written on the chalkboard. His evaluations improved greatly, and one of the student team members was hired by an interviewer who was impressed by the student's experience in using formal team work to solve a real problem.

When a professor of English found herself in an over-enrolled literature course in a room badly designed for the discussion she had planned, her team investigated several alternative seating arrangements and prepared the room before each class until the arrangement was found that promoted the best class discussion under the available conditions. Another professor was troubled by overt hostility to the material he taught in a race and gender course, and particularly by hecklers who sat together in a part of the auditorium. His team simply suggested, "Tell 'em to shut up!" - which in fact he did after acknowledging the student source for the suggestion. The shock kept the hecklers at bay for about two weeks. When they again started, the instructor's "Shut up!" was echoed from the team members. When the hecklers tried once again, about 80% of the class turned toward the hecklers with a "SHUT UP!" that carried the tone of real

disapproval. The class was reclaimed for learning for the rest of the term.

THE RESULT OF TEAMS

There are reasons why student management teams are usually successful, not the least of which is joint ownership of responsibility. When a class sparkles, everyone gets to bask in the success; when it fails, it is no longer sufficient to blame it all on the professor. No one likes to fail, so when a potential failure is shared, more participants will actively work to avoid it.

Regular formal meetings with the team are analogous to consultations sessions with a faculty colleague or developer. Research shows that these usually result in gains. When a professor commits to discussion and reflection every two weeks, plus to doing the work toward actual change, it is hardly surprising that some good results occur. Research also shows that highly rated teachers are distinguished by meaningful interaction with students outside the class. For professors who have created no opportunity for such interaction, team meetings secure some of this.

The experiences of business confirm that working teams do create a synergy, wherein

more ideas and creative approaches are generated than by one researcher or boss working in isolation. "None of us is as smart as all of us!" has proven itself in research centers, in assembly lines, and in marketing.

Teams provide continuous feedback. Evaluating professors at the end of a course is analogous to "inspecting in quality." Deming warned of "inspecting in" as a lost cause in reducing defects in manufactured products. He recommended giving attention to improvement throughout the manufacturing process. When professors receive feedback only after the end of a course, the main opportunity for improvement has been missed. Rather than by inspection at the end; improvement in teaching results from continuous effort and reflection – both traits that student management teams promote. Ongoing support nurtures self-confidence and enthusiasm. Professors and administrators have failed to recognise the degree to which students hunger to discuss teaching and to have their own concerns, as learners in the process, recognized and valued by professors. When discussion occurs and positive changes start to result, it becomes an exciting experience for students and a process of renewal for professors.

The team is often a less threatening place to admit shortcomings and to search for solutions than might be a conference with peers who will later judge the professor for rank, tenure or salary. The use of student management teams may be a particularly good option for a chair to recommend to faculty because these teams promote teaching improvement without being intrusive. Setting up the situation where faculty can first polish teaching by working directly with their students is a good way to help a new professor begin his or her career.

Edward B. Nuhfer is Director, Office of Teaching Effectiveness, University of Colorado at Denver, and the former Director and founder, Teaching Excellence Center, University of Wisconsin at Platteville. He is the author of A Handbook for Student Management Teams.

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A Guide to Quality Issues

Jennifer Rowley provides a useful guide to quality issues in HE by defining concepts and outlining quality assurance mechanisms.



Quality, and in particular, quality in teaching, is on the lips of every senior manager in HE. Indeed, current initiatives require that awareness of the issues associated with quality be widespread. This implies that all members of an institution should have an appreciation of the quality mechanisms in operation and an understanding of how they can contribute to the quality of the education offered to students.

Mechanisms and frameworks for ensuring quality vary from one institution to another, but there are some key underlying and common issues. This article attempts to review these common issues and to highlight some areas where there is scope for continuing debate. It should serve to place quality concepts in a wider framework.

SOME DEFINITIONS

Those new to concepts associated with quality might justifiably be confused by the various terms.

To define four basic terms first:

Quality Assurance is a general term which encompasses all the policies, systems and processes directed towards ensuring the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of educational provision.

Quality Audit is the process of ensuring that the quality arrangements with institutions are satisfactory and effective. Since the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act this has been the responsibility of the Higher Education Quality Council.

Quality Assessment is concerned with the external review of, and judgement about, the quality of teaching and learning in institutions, in particular subject areas. Since April 1993, this has been a statutory obligation upon the funding councils.

Quality Framework is the set of procedures adopted by an institution in order to achieve appropriate quality assurance.

The term quality itself is possibly the most

difficult to define. Burge and Tannock (1993) define "quality of education" as:

"the success with which an institution provides educational environments which enable students effectively to achieve worthwhile goals, including appropriate academic standards".

This quotation focusses on "fitness for purpose". Other definitions emphasise customer / consumer satisfaction as the key feature of the quality of a product or service. For example, there are a number of definitions of quality offered by various agencies and authorities in the quality movement. The British Standards Institution (BS4778) defines quality as:

"the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear upon its ability to satisfy the stated or implied needs".

Crosby (1991) says that "quality must be defined as conformance to requirements" and Deming (1986) defines his concept as:

"quality transfers waste of man-hours and machine-time into the manufacture of good products and better service".

These three quotations cover three fundamental aspects in the creation of services and products. The first is that the service or product must meet the expectations of the customer. The second is that the service or product must meet its specification, or, more simply, do what it is claimed it will do. Third, a quality philosophy promotes doing things right the first time. By eliminating rework and correction of defects, an organisation can allocate resources more efficiently, producing more, to a higher standard, with the same overall resources.

ENSURING QUALITY

Let us return then to the basic concepts of quality assurance or control, quality audit and quality assessment. In general, *quality assurance procedures* are internal procedures established by the institution. *Quality audit* is an external audit designed to check on these procedures

and *quality assessment* is an external subject-based assessment of quality. Quality audit and quality assessment can therefore be viewed as externally imposed monitoring over which the institution has little control, and which are therefore likely to impose constraints or suggest directions and changes from outside the organisation.

Quality assurance is the part of the system over which the institution has control and it is therefore particularly important that quality assurance procedures are an integral part of the quality development programme of an institution.

The primary responsibility for assuring, monitoring and enhancing the quality of the educational experience of students rests with the institutions and their staff. Although quality assurance systems vary between institutions, all institutions must:

- a) have an explicit demonstrable, though not necessarily elaborate system of quality control, and
- b) engage in consultations with staff during the development of the system, and train them for their part in it.

THE QUALITY DEBATE

Current interest in procedures for assuring the quality of education has been triggered largely by concerns with accountability, and value for money, or alternatively expressed, making more efficient use of resources. There are some who would express scepticism regarding this current focus on quality and would voice one or more of the following opinions.

- "HE has always been committed to quality and the essence of a high quality HE institution is that it should be a self-critical academic community, committed to the maintenance of academic standards."
- "It might not be possible to provide a learning environment of quality at a lower and ever decreasing unit cost."

- "The task of relating the value gained or benefits of HE to the resources invested to achieve those benefits is at best complex and possibly impossible."
- "Elaborate quality systems may not have any positive impact on the quality of the student's learning experience. Indeed in diverting resources, particularly staff time, towards such systems there is a danger that the systems undermine the quality that they are designed to monitor and promote."
- "An objective consideration of the quality of education in a given subject area or across an institution should be separated from issues of cost of its provision and associated resource issues, but is this feasible?"
- "Many existing quality assurance procedures focus primarily on teaching and the staff whose primary focus is in this area. Library and Computing Services staff, Departmental administrative staff and Central Support staff are often too peripheral to this process. Quality assurance of research activities is often totally neglected, and, may by some be regarded as impossible and intractable."

It is important that all staff in HE be aware of their role in enhancing the quality of the student learning experience. Mechanisms and



frameworks for ensuring quality vary from one institution to another, but the key underlying issues are applicable to us all.

Jennifer Rowley is Head of the Department of Business and Management Studies, Crewe + Alsager Faculty, Manchester Metropolitan University.

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Hunters and Gatherers

Julienne Hanson pursues Tony Beecher's metaphor of "academic tribes"¹ and finds that anthropological concepts illuminate the division of labour in academia.

Those familiar with the literature about pre-settled societies will be aware that the majority practise a simple division of labour based on gender: men hunt whilst women gather.

Hunting is a high-status, prestige activity. It normally contributes rather little to the diet, accounting for only a fifth to two fifths of all food consumed. Gathering, by comparison, is low-status, time-consuming and onerous, but is highly productive. The productivity per man-hour of hunting is 800 calories per hour: a woman-hour of gathering produces 2,000 calories.

At the same time, the probability of a hunter's "bringing home the bacon" on any given expedition is less than one per cent, even in hunter-gatherer societies which are well-adapted to their environment. As the anthropologist James Woodburn (1968) remarks:

"There are some men who have killed scarcely a single large animal during their entire adult lives. Whether a man hunts is his own affair. Other men will not put pressure on him."

So much is this the case that hunters are notorious for leaving camp with a great flourish of activity, only to squat down again once out of sight of their busy wives, in order to gamble away their weapons! By contrast, the probability of women returning to camp with vegetable foodstuffs on any given sortie is a hundred per cent.

In short, hunting is a high-risk low-return activity, whilst gathering is a low-risk high-return activity. As might be expected, the risky survival strategy of hunting is almost everywhere bolstered by an elaborate apparatus of myth and ritual, in contrast with the routine acquisition of the staples of life which

rarely if ever fail. Hunters world-wide are notoriously vain, and spend a great deal of time ornamenting their bodies and preening themselves in the clubhouse. Hunting has charisma. Anybody can gather.

I would not be troubling you with this account were it not to furnish an apt analogy for a phenomenon which is encountered so often within university life that it appears almost to have the force of a natural law.

RESEARCH FOR THE HUNTER

As we all know, academic labour fundamentally depends upon two distinct activities, research and teaching, which compete for an individual's time and intellectual energies. These competing demands seem often to be dealt with quite differently by men and by women.

The majority of men adopt an aggressively research-orientated attitude towards career development. Most men would agree that in order to be a successful academic, 'research is a right, teaching is a duty, and administration is a chore'. At the same time many of the most able women in the universities find the productive parts of their career are absorbed by teaching and administrative duties, often to the detriment of their ability to compete equally on the research front. The result is that, just as in hunter-gatherer societies, labour within the university system tends to be divided, with men monopolising a disproportionate share of prestigious research activity, or academic hunting, whilst women bear the greater share of teaching and administration, which is perceived to be a more menial activity, the academic equivalent of gathering.

The intellectual content, rhythms, and even the mentality required by the research function are quite unlike those which underpin teaching. Like hunting, research is a high-risk, high-status but often relatively low return occupation which normally accounts for a smaller proportion of income than teaching. In many fields, research is characterised by relatively prolonged periods of gestation interspersed with bursts of frenetic activity as deadlines approach. Research communities, like



Among the Tribes of Academe



hunters, operate within an extended, often international academic landscape. The mystique which surrounds successful research operators far exceeds the acclaim given to exceptionally gifted teachers.

A striking example of the hunter-gatherer syndrome is to be found in a practice which is gaining currency in the Universities, downwind of research selectivity and teaching quality assessment. A new division of labour is emerging among senior academics into Subject Professors and Directors of Study, based on their respective accountability for research and teaching.

Subject Professors collectively are responsible for the maintenance of the high-profile, externally-funded research and consultancy which, in most Departments, provides a small proportion of the total income generated – the 'academic meat'. The glittering prize they hunt, preside over and defend is a coveted 5A research rating, but these high-status individuals are also charged with the tasks of promoting knowledge to the outside world,

formulating academic strategy and developing the institutional business plan.

STUDY FOR THE GATHERER

Directors of Study collectively orchestrate the teaching and administration of the students who are the 'bread and butter' of university subsistence. They play an essentially facilitative role in disseminating knowledge and skills, implementing policy, and safeguarding academic standards. The job is recognised as labour-intensive, so much so that these individuals are excused the role of active researcher.

All too predictably, the Subject Professors tend to be male, the Directors of Study female. Each Professor/Director pair¹ forms a professional partnership which has characteristics not unlike a companionate marriage. Whether this phenomenon originates in nature or nurture is perhaps as contentious as the hunter-gatherer phenomenon in pre-settled societies. There are those who argue that it is the female tendency to prefer

consensus to competition and to facilitate rather than to command. Others suggest that gendered roles within the university system are a purely social artifact, which can be remedied given the political good will.

Clearly, the hunter-gatherer syndrome is only an analogy, and it would be dangerous to read too much into what appears to be a rather striking and humorous resemblance between the respective roles of primitive hunters and gatherers, and the habitual modes of operation required successfully to carry out academic functions of research and teaching, if only because the former is given by accident of birth whilst the latter is achieved through intellectual effort. It must therefore be possible for an academic gatherer to, as it were, change her sex and become a hunter. At the same time, female hunters today are almost as rare as the fabled Amazons, with only 4.9% of Professors in Higher Education being women.

As an organisational strategy, a hunter-gatherer mode of existence has much to commend it. After all, it served our human ancestors well for the best part of 3 million years. However, as a means to resolve the pressures of academic labour within the modern university, it is not a little disquieting.

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- 2 Woodburn, James, (1968) *An Introduction to Hadza Economy*, in Lee Richard and DeVore Irvan eds. *Man the Hunter*, Aldine Publishing Company, Chicago.
- 3 there are four within my own Department



Dr Hanson is at University College, London.

Mathematics and the Student

Joanna Smailes discusses her personal experiences of student numeracy and provides some practical advice

Remember those good old school days and that sinking feeling when you had to go to that one lesson you didn't really like and found difficult? I bet, if a national survey were conducted on this, the majority of people would say that subject was mathematics.

I was one of the lucky ones. I actually enjoyed it. So I suppose it was inevitable that I would end up where I am today: for the past four years I have been a lecturer in Business Modelling at the University of Northumbria.

As a lecturer in HE, I and many other colleagues have certain expectations about the level of knowledge of incoming students. After all, that is why GCSEs and A Levels are so important. Unfortunately, in the area of numeracy (and I am sure there are others) levels of knowledge are definitely lower than expected. The University of Northumbria has recognised this problem and a Numeracy Network has been formed, where lecturers involved in numerical subjects meet regularly to discuss the problems and look at possible solutions.

ASSESSING STUDENT KNOWLEDGE?

What can lecturers know about a student's mathematical background? At present the indicator used to judge students' mathematical capability is their GCSE grades. The qualification required for business and management courses at this university is that a student (excluding mature and overseas students) must have a minimum of GCSE Grade C in Mathematics.

However, a Grade C in mathematics could have been gained from two different levels of exam paper. One level allows for Grade A and below and the other has a maximum of a Grade C. One student with grade C could have achieved this by covering significantly less material than another student with the same grade. Admissions tutors have no way of telling in which level of paper the grade was awarded.

THE BASIC SKILLS REQUIRED

For students embarking on the first year of their HND business course, the following

basic numeracy skills are assumed:

- simple mental arithmetic, including negative numbers and inequalities;
- calculations on a calculator (including correct use of brackets and memory);
- fractions, decimals, standard form;
- rounding and estimation;
- substitution into formulae and rearrangement of the formulae;
- percentages.

To assess whether these skills are covered at GCSE I looked at some past GCSE papers which were set by the Northern Examining Authority. From these papers it appears that some aspects only appear on the higher level papers. These aspects are expressing numbers in standard form, inequalities, calculations involving negative numbers (which are more than simple addition and subtraction) and rearrangement of formulae.

We could decide only to admit students who have taken the higher level GCSE paper, but this would cause terrible recruitment problems for the less popular courses. Even these students would have had a two year gap in studying mathematics when they started their course.

This gap is recognised and in the past, the first week of a quantitative course was always used as an initial revision session. In recent years the time spent on numeracy revision has steadily increased and in some cases it can take around four weeks.

AN ALTERNATIVE

During the last academic year I decided to write an open learning booklet on numeracy and try this out as a revision method of the numeracy skills assumed for first year HND courses. To assess its effectiveness a pilot study on its use was carried out on the HND course in Business Information Technology.

The booklet consisted of sections on the following topics:

- Mathematical notation
- Negative numbers
- Rounding
- Fractions
- The ordering of mathematical problems
- Percentages



Each section included explanations of the area, worked examples and a number of examples for the students to try themselves. This booklet was then issued in the first lecture and the students were informed that they would be formally tested and graded on the material in four weeks, the catch being that no calculators were allowed.

I had earlier made the conscious decision to exclude calculators based on discussions at one of the Numeracy Network meetings. The Head of the Careers service at the university had made a presentation on the use of numerical reasoning tests in graduate recruitment. He reported that an increasing number of companies were using these tests in the first round of the selection process and often calculators are not allowed.

This reason was explained to the students and for the four-week period they were left to their own devices.

The test consisted of two sections, the first of simple straight-forward calculations (e.g. Find 25% of 64), and the second of brief application problems which may have required the use of one or more of the sections covered in the booklet.

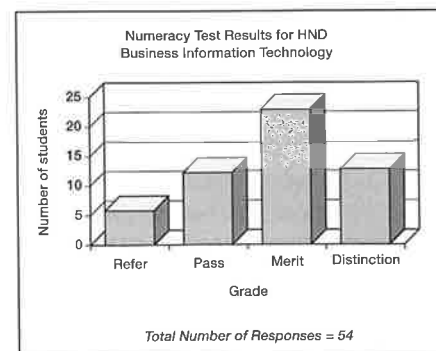


Figure 1

percent of respondents stated that they had taken more than one attempt in GCSE mathematics.

I was personally surprised at the high numbers of students achieving a grade C from the lower level paper. Therefore, I went on to compare this HND group with students studying the degree in same subject area. The mathematical background of these students was significantly stronger, with well over 60% of the students having a Grade A or B and the majority taking the higher level paper.

BACKGROUND AND TEST PERFORMANCE

Those students with the higher GCSE grades performed very well on the test, and all were awarded either a merit or distinction. As expected, the performance of students with Grade C was mixed. The most interesting observation was that test referrals were either mature students with no formal mathematical qualification or were students who had taken more than one attempt at GCSE.

Pursuing this line of analysis further, it was discovered that all students except one who sat the GCSE more than once did not achieve more than a pass grade on the test. The exception was a candidate who gained a GCSE grade B at the second attempt and was awarded a merit for the test.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE TEST

The majority (86%) felt the test was fair. Eight percent stated that the test was too easy, all of these were awarded a distinction on the test. Only a small number (6%) who all either failed or just passed the test stated they found it too difficult.

When considering their own performance, around 40% felt that they performed as expected, with the rest split equally between performing better or worse than expected. In the main it was those students who were awarded merits who felt they had actually performed better than they expected.

The students were also asked to reflect on the work they did in preparation of the test. Forty four percent stated they wished they had done more work. This figure included a third of those people who had performed

very well on the test. The majority of candidates who were given the lower grades of "Refer" and "Pass" did state that they would, on reflection, have done more work than they did.

CONCLUSION

The use of open learning booklet for revision of basic numeracy skills can be considered a success in this case. The test revealed some areas of concern about students' mathematical skills, particularly dealing with negative numbers and the ordering of mathematical problems.

The ordering of mathematical problems is a very important skill which is used extensively in spreadsheet modelling, a major component of the Business Information Technology course.

I personally would have slight concerns about using open learning for numeracy revision if there were not "a stick" in the form of a graded mathematical test, even though 50% of the students who returned their feedback questionnaires, stated they would have still worked through the booklet if there had not been a test.

As a next step, I am hoping to devise an interactive computer learning package for the revision of basic numeracy skills. This will still be based around the booklet, but the new development will allow greater flexibility for both the student and the lecturer. The student will have no strict time constraints on when the material must be covered and some aspects they personally have concerns with can be repeated. They can then check on their own progress from an in-built testing system and at the same time lecturer can monitor the results and progress made by any one student.

This is an ambitious undertaking and will take time and resources to set up. Until then the booklet will be revised, based on the experience of the pilot study, and used by myself and others as a basis for numeracy revision.

Joanne Smailes is a Lecturer in Business Modelling with the Newcastle Business School, University of Northumbria at Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8ST

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25th-26th April,
Black Horse House, Reading
led by *Graham Gibbs*.

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10th May,
Rewley House, Oxford
led by *Kate Williams*.

Reducing Dependence on Lectures in the Delivery of Social Science & Business Studies

10th May,
Radcliffe House, Warwick University
led by *Bob Farmer and Diana Eastcott*.

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11th May
Radcliffe House, Warwick University
led by *Carole Baume and Chris Rust*

Educational Development Symposium 5: 'Supporting lecturers in researching their teaching'

16th May,
Radcliffe House, Warwick University
led by *Liz Beatty*

Basic Topics Revisited: 'Lecturing'

24th May,
UMIST, Manchester
led by *Graham Martin*

Engineering Laboratory Teaching

1 June 1995,
Sunley Management Centre, Northampton
led by *Roy Gregory and Ivan Moore*.

Developing Transferable Skills

1st-2nd June 1995,
Radcliffe House, Warwick University
led by *Graham Gibbs*.

Improving Teaching Quality using Peer Observation

6th June,
Black Horse House, Reading
led by *Sue Crane*.

Institutional Policies for Profiling and Recording Achievement in Higher Education

8th-9th June,
Radcliffe House, Warwick University
led by *Alan Jenkins and Lawrie Walker*.

For further information contact:

The Oxford Centre for Staff Development,
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Getting the Right Information

Phil Sheffield explains how the British Education Index can provide an invaluable aid in keeping us up-to-date with the latest findings in teaching and learning while protecting us from the painful congestion of information over-load.

The information in this issue of *New Academic* represents one invaluable strand in an increasingly complex web of resources for the researcher/teacher. The practical effects of information overload will be all too familiar to readers of this journal. Pursuing background reading to inform and support activities might be viewed as a luxury when the demands on available time continue to increase. At best, individuals will apply an often unconscious prioritisation of resources: to the key journal in the field, to newsheets, the invisible college, electronic bulletin boards, and, increasingly, to the Internet. Information providers would maintain that access to appropriate information will save time and that making it easy to find and acquire is an obligation on them. This article is written from the perspective of the *British Education Index (BEI)*, focusing on an international drive to make educational information more accessible and to encourage the use of appropriate resources.

The *BEI* is one of a number of information services in education and training, the purpose of which is to support teaching and learning by facilitating access to documented research, experience and expertise. The *BEI* was first published in 1961 as a response from education librarians to readers' demands for subject access to the contents of British journals. A number of similar subject-based systems were being developed at the same time, most notably those established in 1966 by the *Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC)* of the United States Department of Education.

The establishment of *BEI* management at the University of Leeds in 1985 led to its involvement in a number of initiatives to improve co-operation among individual systems to the benefit of information seekers world-wide. The most significant of these

was the formation in 1986 of a group, *International ERIC*, comprising *ERIC* and the producers of the Australian, British and Canadian education indexes. The group's main long-term objectives are:

- to rationalise the coverage of international educational research literature
- to promote better exchange of information
- to build compatible retrieval tools, indexes and thesauri
- to eliminate duplication between services.

Since its inception, the group has moved towards the achievement of some of these objectives:

- where possible the Australian, British and Canadian services have modelled their descriptive indexing on *ERIC* practices: sharing "core" terminology makes it easier for service users to locate relevant information;
- communication about the content of an international English-language thesaurus for education has continued between the four databases;
- the Australian, British and Canadian education indexes and thesauri have been made available on CD-ROM in a form compatible with the *ERIC* databases. Many academic sites now have access to genuine "International ERIC" information. Sample references from the CD are given in the accompanying box.

In the same period, each of the services has been adapting to meet the changing needs of their users: the *BEI*'s own progress exemplifies this process:

- the *BEI* and the *British Education Theses Index* were made available online alongside *ERIC* on the world's largest database host, Dialog, in 1987;



- the *British Education Thesaurus*, first published in 1988, was revised and a second edition published in 1991;
- publication frequency of the Index increased in 1991;
- work began on a bibliography on vocational education and training in 1993 (scheduled for publication early in 1995);
- regular exchange of information has been established with services in Austria, France, Hungary, Sweden, the Czech and Slovak republics and Argentina and Mexico, amongst others;
- the number and range of journals covered by the *BEI* has steadily increased: the range of materials covered is set to change imminently with the inclusion of significant report literature and wider expansion is envisaged;
- perhaps most significantly, the Index has just launched a literature awareness service which undertakes to supply regular reference listings via mail, Email or fax to individuals or institutions with a consistent interest in a specific area of education/training. Geared towards individual rather than general needs, this service lends itself particularly well to ongoing and fixed-term research interests. Charges are made by references received rather than by subscriptions and the content of lists can be dictated by the recipient through negotiation with the Index office.

This short summary can only give an overview of developments in this area. The increasing use of services is the real proof of their value and awareness of their existence is fundamental to the individual's choice of an appropriate medium for information acquisition.

Sample issues of the printed *BEI* and further information about it, the new reference listing service, and *International ERIC* are available.

Phil Sheffield is Manager of The British Education Index, The Brotherton Library, The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT; Tel/Fax: 0532 335524; Email: libgam@lucs-01.leeds.ac.uk.

Credits for Career Planning

Philippa Ashton and Rosalind Healy claim that their university's innovative system of career planning and preparation for students is probably unique: students may obtain credits for what they learn.

Preparation for work is one of the purposes of HE. This preparation can include the skills and knowledge associated with different academic subjects, but personal and job-searching skills are also critical to the success of graduate employment. Whilst the former are coherently delivered and tested in universities, the latter are not.

In an attempt to put careers education firmly on the agenda and open up opportunity to more students, the University of Central Lancashire Careers Service, with the support of the Enterprise Unit, developed an elective or free choice unit - Planning Your Career.

The second level unit runs for two hours each week over a semester and has now been offered in each semester over the last four years. Unusually, the unit allows students to gain credits - five in this case - for their learning in career planning and preparation.

Emphasis is on continuing personal development planning rather than on short term job search. The aims of the unit are to develop awareness of transferable skills and self-knowledge, increase knowledge of career opportunities, enhance decision-making and problem-solving and develop competence in CV and other presentation skills.

The programme is student-centred and activity-based, with most of the learning taking place in small groups and seminars and by individual projects. Important and popular elements of the unit are the employer panels and other opportunities for first hand advice from recruiters. Assessments are related to the aims and objectives of the programme. Fifty per cent of assessment is by individual project - often a personal portfolio - the remainder being learning logs completed throughout the programme and evidence of verbal and written communication.

STUDENT RESPONSE

Whilst it is a free choice elective (students at the University of Central Lancashire must take two five credit electives during their degree programme), Planning Your Career has proved to be extremely popular, with student numbers capped at 100 per semester.

Student feedback has been very encouraging and positive too. Questioned at the start of the unit, students rated their existing skills as 6.98 out of a total of 18. At the end of the unit the total rose to 12.8, again out of a total of 18. Ninety-five per cent of students taking the course rated it as 5 or better on a 7 point scale.

The impact on graduate employment has yet to be fully tested, but it is perhaps no coincidence that 1992/93 figures for University of Central Lancashire students were above the national average whilst in the past they had been a cause for some concern.

FRANCHISING THE UNIT

The unit was particularly popular with Combined Honours students who were likely not to have made any career choices by the time they joined the University. We needed to find a way to provide the same support more widely, and in particular to students who had, by choice of course, some idea of their career aspirations.

The unit was therefore 'franchised', initially to the Faculty of Design and Technology, with pilots in the Department of Art and Fashion and the Department of Built Environment.

Franchising has several benefits. The most immediate is that careers advisory staff and departmental staff sit down together to plan the programme and this encourages sharing of ideas and expertise. It became clear during these initial discussions that departmental staff

were not confident that they could develop students' communication skills, including CV and letter writing, but had a wealth of information about industry structures and relevant companies. Initially careers staff agreed to run the franchised units alongside departmental staff so that they could develop confidence in their ability to manage the whole programme.

The basic unit is tried and tested with student feedback, allowing wrinkles and problems to be ironed out and existing materials and exercises re-used. Finally, basing franchised units on one that is already validated circumvents what can be a lengthy validation process: at the University of Central Lancashire, this is made possible through a speedy Minor Changes route. The aims and objectives remain the same and many of the essential elements are retained.

The franchised units do, however, differ from department to department. The new units are built around relevant career opportunities and can concentrate on the skills necessary for employment in particular industries rather than tools for career decision-making.

FASHIONED TO NEEDS

Planning Your Career in Fashion, for instance, is designed to prepare students for their third year sandwich placement as well as for their ultimate career choices.

This programme also includes sessions on small business start-up and freelance work. The importance of the telephone as a means of communication in this industry is reflected by the inclusion of telephone skills practice. Employer panels remain an important element, but in this instance students choose and invite their own industry representatives. Built Environment students, however, are able to place their own career aspirations in the context of a British industry in recession and it therefore has a European focus.

Similar units are now planned for the Department of Visual Communication and 3D Design, and for Electrical and Electronic Engineering, and the word has spread to the Lancashire Business School where they are developing their own version. New materials will be developed, trialled and published in 1995 and there are also plans for a distance learning package. It is expected that by 1995 all departments in the Faculty of Design and Technology will have a validated unit in careers education, offering all students the opportunity to plan, develop and obtain credit for career preparation.

Philippa Ashton is a Senior Lecturer in Design Management and Enterprise Co-ordinator.

Rosalind Healy is a Careers Advisor at the University of Central Lancashire.

How do I get to where I want to be?

Steve Dalton, Chrissie Gibson and Jan Moore describe how they were involved in setting up an integrated careers education programme within the BSc (Hons) Environmental Management degree at Manchester Metropolitan University.

More and more students have been asking "How can I get where I want to be after graduation?" A reasonable question!

During a chance conversation, we and other members of staff in the Environmental and Geographical Sciences Department and the Careers Service reflected on this growing phenomenon, and this led us to make a firm commitment to provide relevant, integrated careers education within the undergraduate course. But how could this be achieved?

We decided that the impending review of our BSc (Hons) Environmental Management degree was an ideal opportunity to embed careers education within the curriculum. We believed it would be better to include practical careers information in the course itself rather than adopt a "bolt-on" careers approach: it would signal to the students at a very early stage in their studies the importance of transferable enterprise and interpersonal skills in enhancing their post graduation prospects. Moreover, Departmental staff could draw on contacts and professional experience to develop discipline-related classroom materials.

There are currently some 25,000 students at Manchester Metropolitan University, and over 300 courses which provide qualifications in 50 different subject areas. This places a huge demand on the central University Careers Service; with a staff of only four advisors it cannot play a major part in careers education within every course. We thought that in-house careers education, developed in conjunction with the Careers Service, would be a more efficient and effective way of delivering careers education.

Both the Department and the Careers Service would work closely together in setting up the programme, but thereafter the Department would be the main provider, with the Careers Service delivering inputs at specific and relevant points within the programme. They would act as the professional consultants and the Department would act as the general practitioners.

ABOUT OUR DEGREE

The BSc (Hons) Environmental Management degree is an innovative, semi-vocational

course for full-time students and incorporates two 6 week placements. Graduates from the course have found employment in a wide range of organisations, including statutory and regulatory agencies, research and monitoring bodies, local authorities, environmental consultancies, conservation groups and voluntary organisations.

During the review of the course, relevant advertised jobs were analysed to identify the skills required. The growing environmental awareness of many organisations, and the changing needs of employers were also taken into account.

The education programme in the Department was based on the framework provided by the work of Law and Watts (1977) and Watts and Hawthorn (1992).

- (a) self-awareness – awareness of the distinctive characteristics (abilities, skills, values and interests) that define the kind of person one is and the sort of person one wishes to become;
- (b) opportunity awareness – awareness of possibilities, the demands they make, and the rewards and satisfactions they can offer;

(c) decision learning – acquisition of skills that will help one to make satisfactory careers decisions;

(d) transition learning – acquisition of skills that will help one implement career decisions and to cope with the transitions that ensue.

Enterprise in Higher Education (EHE) funding facilitated the release of staff from academic duties to meet, discuss and plan the programme with the Careers Service. Staff development workshops subsequently helped to establish a Careers philosophy within the Department, as well as providing a way to share good practice and develop classroom techniques.

HOW IT WORKS

Techniques and Skills units provided opportunities within the teaching timetable for careers sessions. These run through all three years of the degree. IT, statistics, oral presentations, group work and other transferable skills are developed throughout these units. In addition, the degree incorporates Skills Weeks, during which all other teaching is suspended and the time is used for skills development.

| LEVEL 1 | ACTIVITIES |
|-----------------------|---|
| Skills Week 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Production of a CV (also an assessed word-processing exercise). ■ Placement presentations – 2nd year students give presentations to 1st years about their placement experience. ■ Introduction to the CE programme and portfolio. |
| Techniques and skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Talks by environmental management practitioners. ■ Skills awareness exercise. ■ Reflection on progress |
| LEVEL 2 | ACTIVITIES |
| Skills Week 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Placement presentations to 1st year students. ■ Portfolio update. |
| Techniques and Skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Feedback on placements and other achievements. ■ Assignment about decision making, focusing on the 3rd year project and options ■ Talk on the role of the Careers Service ■ CV update |
| LEVEL 3 | ACTIVITIES |
| Skills week 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Portfolio update. ■ Interests, values and abilities exercise. ■ Job Applications and CVs. |
| Skills week 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mock interviews |

The careers programme starts in the first Skills Week, which is also the first teaching week of year one. This is a useful "kick-start" to the idea of careers education in the minds of the students. From then on there is a natural progression of careers development throughout the first and second years. In the third year intensive careers education is concentrated primarily into the two skills weeks, with ongoing careers development continuing.

An important feature of the programme is the Careers Portfolio, which contains careers information and activity sheets. The portfolio is also used to store information about likely employers and post-graduate courses, which students collect throughout their three years. It is also designed to provide a basis for discussion in tutorial sessions. The careers programme is mainly carried out in small groups to allow for discussion.

JOB SEEKING FOR REAL

To make the activities more realistic, the two placements are used as examples of the job seeking process in miniature. Students have to produce a CV and "apply" for the placement position. Staff match the aspirations of the students with the most appropriate organisation. This involves interviewing the students and offering them the placement or not as the case may be! In many cases, the organisations themselves also formally interview the students before offering the placement.

The culmination of the programme occurs in the third year where students are invited to

attend preparatory sessions for job opportunities involving practitioners and a careers advisor. Students can then be involved in mock interviews where they act as both interviewer and interviewee.

EVALUATING THE PROGRAMME

The programme allows each student to discover the sort of future they would like and provides them with the skills to achieve their goals.

A key element of the success of the programme has been the enthusiasm of staff, both in the Department and in the Careers Service.

Implementation relies on the willingness of staff to try different teaching styles and to provide more personal tutorial support than they are probably used to. There is therefore a need for ongoing staff development in this area.

The nature of the course and the placement elements have meant that staff already have a wide network of contacts with employers. Senior managers from such organisations are invited to talk to students about current job opportunities, job applications and interview techniques.

The ongoing contact with employers enables staff to keep abreast of changes in practice which can be incorporated into the programme.

The Department and the Careers Service are now working closely together. The Careers Service has provided useful materials through an EHE-funded Institutional Careers

project and has given general support and advice. The students are now more aware of the Careers Service and are seeking help and guidance at an earlier stage, and with more focus than previously.

We are seeking to improve the programme all the time. Informal discussions with students have already produced some interesting and constructive comments. Evaluation is to continue to ensure that the context is appropriate and up-to-date and that it is delivered in the most effective way. Monitoring of the student cohort 6 and 18 months after graduation, including employers' feedback, will be used to assess the success of the programme retrospectively. We firmly believe that this programme can be adapted into other degree courses, and that it should be a vital and constantly evolving facet of the educational experience offered to our students.

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Professor Steve Dalton & Chrissie Gibson are with the Department of Environmental & Geographical Sciences, Jan Moore is with the Careers Service, Manchester Metropolitan University.

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WHO NEEDS A HAT?
Japan and the Pursuit of a New
American Identity
Walter Feinberg
 Routledge (1993)

Japan, as every teacher knows only too well, has an enviable education system. Against its impressive standards, British education emerges as distinctly second rate, a finding that confirms what many had suspected all along – namely that British teachers are incompetent and British schools inefficient. There are powerful implications here for HE too.

This book is for those who feel such allegations are convenient rather than convincing. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, it is a book for those reformers who fondly imagined that by changing the educational system, standards would rise and in so doing, render Britain, like Japan, more competitive industrially. This book will please teachers for the same reason it will disconcert the reformer – it re-discovers a truism which, in the frenetic educational climate of the last ten years, appears sadly to have been forgotten – namely that without his army, Napoleon was just a man with a hat.

To put it more precisely, the main difference between the UK and Japan resides, not in the quality of its teachers, but, in the attitude of its children. This book offers a salutary warning to those who put their faith in the national curriculum, for it unashamedly assigns primacy to “cultural” factors in explaining both the educational and economic pre-eminence of Japan.

Admittedly this book is exclusively concerned with the American debate over

education: however, given that both the US and UK are consumed with much the same anxieties, it is a difference of little consequence.

More significant by far is the author's analysis of how Japan has come to enjoy such educational and economic preeminence. The British reader will look in vain for any sign that the Japanese miracle was worked, as the UK now desperately hopes, by “better management”. Good managers Japan doubtless has, but as Feinberg's analysis reveals, the successful manager has already learned in school that “nails which stick out, get hammered in”. It is ironic that the country which figured so prominently in the feverish criticism of British education in the 80's should have been so totally ignored in the remedy for such “educational failure”.

As Feinberg waspishly observes, Japan still pays teachers essentially on the basis of seniority, still eschews competition between them, still has a salary gap between the lowest paid shop worker and the highest paid executive which is amongst the lowest in the world, and still has Mr Toyota take his dinner with the workers.

After reading Feinberg, the detached reader cannot but wonder if the UK, with its performance indicators and its merit awards, is not making too much of those with hats.

James Murphy,
University of Lancaster

BOOKS

EMOTIONAL TIES
Education in a Single Europe
Colin Brock and Witold Tulasiewicz, eds.
 Routledge, 1994, £45

At £45 it's not cheap but you do get authoritative accounts of the current educational scene (Primary to Higher) in all twelve EC countries. The emphasis is on “readiness for Europe”, but it's also a useful reference for readers who do not have that particular focus.

The editors point out in their introduction that education in the Community has been seen as an economic rather than a cultural matter. They see the future as one in which “inter-cultural pedagogy” takes on greater importance; the goal is that Europe may become “an emotional home for Europeans” and education (including visits and exchanges) may play a role to the extent it becomes affective as well as cognitive.

The reality, though, I feel, is that national school systems are designed to bolster national identity; France is only the most unrepentant example of this basic fact. The economic challenge of the Single Market does not necessarily reduce this nationalist tendency and may well increase it.

But, at the same time, it does demand better language skills, better knowledge of the other cultures. Harmonization of the systems is a long way off and Europe's education will indeed for a long time be a “mosaic”. But familiarity with the mosaic will become more and more necessary. The book enables this familiarity and shows how the nationalist/internationalist tension is being worked out in the different countries.

The problems of multiple comparison are not really solved: the reader would have to invent his or her own matrix to compare the countries systematically.

The book does not escape blandness and the neutral tone often masks the fact that these educational conflicts are very hot indeed. We are a long way away from the experiential realities of life in school and university class-rooms.

Colin Evans,
School of European Studies, University of Cardiff

DOOMED DEFINITIONS?
What is Quality in Higher Education?
Edited by Diana Green
 SRHE and Open University Press, £12.99

Not surprisingly, this book tells us more about the quality industry in HE at a particular time than about quality itself. Students of Plato's Socratic dialogues could have told us that attempting simple definitions of complex properties of human behaviour is philosophically a doomed endeavour.

The book's strength is to have assembled some of the principal players of recent years, representatives of PCFC, HMI, HEQC, and CNAA, to reflect on the differing (if only slightly) approaches of their organisations or, in the case of Malcolm Frazer, to look at the international scene. Diana Green provides a clear and reasonably detached overview and Pauline Perry relates the issue of quality to

the diverse needs of individual students in the enlarged sector. The two contributions from the industry/business perspective are interesting in themselves, but serve only to reinforce the prejudices of those who believe that our activities are so different in character as to limit severely the specific lessons to be learned from that source.

The volume's weakness, recognised in the brief final chapter, is that it was produced too early to take full account of the assessment systems introduced by the Funding Councils. Their judgemental approach has provoked more searching scrutiny of their methods than has been applied to earlier quality assurance procedures directed towards accreditation or quality enhancement. There is nothing, therefore, about the discrepancies in assessment ratings between different subjects – does this tell us about the quality of the teaching and learning in the subjects or about

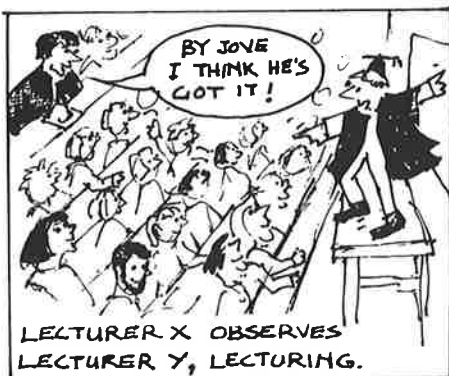
the assessment methods? – or about the apparent mismatch between relatively critical HEQC quality audit reports in certain institutions and their attainment of almost universally ‘excellent’ ratings from HEFCE.

J R G Wright
University of Newcastle upon Tyne

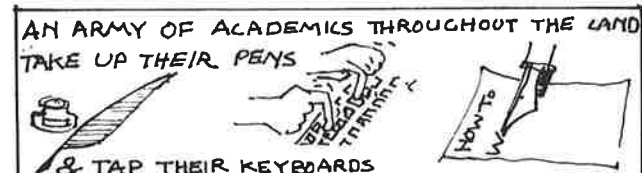
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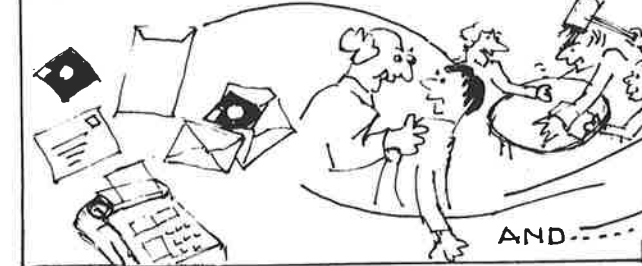
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EUROPEAN OVERVIEW

**European Vocational Education Systems
A Guide to Vocational Education and
Training in the European Community**

Helen Collins

Kogan Page, (1993), pbk, £22.50

The avowed aim of this book is an ambitious one: to fill a gap in the literature by providing a "detailed and cohesive study ... to consider the different initiatives concerned with vocational education and training issues in the European Community". In this, I feel that it has only partly succeeded, and my reading of the book was characterised by alternating periods of enthusiasm and frustration.

On the positive side, the drawing together of basic facts about the general and vocational systems of the twelve EC/EU member countries made interesting reading, throwing into sharp relief both the similarities and differences among them. Equally, it was fascinating to have an overview of the range of policy responses to the common problems of economic change and long term unemployment – for example the creation of industrial/enterprise zones, tax changes, work experience schemes for the young or the long-term unemployed and specific initiatives aimed at groups who are disadvantaged in the labour market.

My reservations about the book are partly to do with its potential use and audiences: is it a reference book, or a general reader? If it is the former, then I have some concerns about the comprehensiveness of the information given, which inevitably represents a selection of what might have been provided and is not always consistent – for example, the percentage of GNP devoted to education is given for only some of the twelve countries covered. If it is a general reader, then I would have liked at least some discussion of the issues raised, rather than an entirely "factual" account. Moreover, I have doubts about the author's own claim to have produced "the facts and not the assumptions of each country", especially when I find an example of an uncritical recycling of government claims that NVQs in the UK are "a simple system of vocational qualifications which encourage employers to train staff, motivate individuals to learn, and help to keep the UK economy competitive".

My final concern relates to the book's "sell-by" date: given the constant changes and developments in vocational education and training, it is perhaps inevitable that particular pieces of information will rapidly (and, in some cases, already have) become out of date.

Gill Helsby, Centre for the Study of Education and Training, Lancaster University.

GAMES TEACHERS PLAY

**Interactive Learning: the Education and
Gaming Yearbook, Volume 2**

Edited by Roger Armstrong, Fred Percival and

Danny Saunders

Kogan Page £35.00

One of my more memorable learning experiences happened at a (then) SCEDSIP conference, many years ago, when I became totally engrossed in the game "Polyopoly". I still remember, and apply, some of the principles and concepts picked-up in Goathland that day/evening/night!

Volume 2 of the SAGSET Yearbook aims to "foster a dynamic learning environment". It assumes, rightly, the importance of interaction to promote quality learning, whether it be in a school, university or industrial environment.

The Yearbook comprises some thirty contributions clustered into themes:

- theoretical overviews;
- induction and team building;
- cross-cultural negotiation;
- business and management;
- science and engineering;
- computerised games and simulations;
- sources of further information.

Individual contributions are varied, theoretical papers, overviews, case studies, tips and detailed descriptions of games all finding a place in the 300 pages. Contributions are lucid, being clearly written using the minimum of jargon and most being really succinct – a tribute, I'm sure, to the prowess of the editors. I'm left feeling that I want to try some of what is described. And generally there is enough detail to do so.

But here lies one of the few potential problems for readers. Those familiar with the use of games and simulations, particularly if they involve much social interaction, will understand the sensitivity and feeling that are so often necessary. I am not sure that this is obvious to a new reader dipping into the book. One of the contributors advises, "warm-ups should not be used indiscriminately. In order for them to be effective [and, I would add, psychologically safe], it is most important that facilitators choose the ones most appropriate for their groups and desired outcomes." Unfortunately, outcomes for the reader who misses this and slips indiscriminately into the following list of 48 ideas for warm-ups may not be as expected.

I thoroughly recommend this Yearbook to anyone looking for ideas on how to increase interactivity in learning.

*Chris Bell,
University of Plymouth.*

LEARNING FOR TEACHERS

500 Tips for Tutors

Phil Race and Sally Brown

Kogan Page, 1993, pbk. £14.95

One of the good things about this book is that the reader can dip into it almost anywhere and find practical ideas for helping students to be better learners. Divided into six parts (General Study Skills, Starting Off and Working Together, Lectures and Written Work, Learning Resources, Various Kinds of Assessment, and Life Skills), it comprises 50 sub-sections each containing ten ideas through which the tutor can empower students in their learning.

Twenty-seven of these sub-sections begin with the words "Helping learners (to)" and the thread of study skills winds its way throughout the book. Skills such as time management, note-taking, essay-writing, library use, revision and exams – to name but a few – are covered from the angle of how tutors can help their students to develop and apply such skills. Helping learners make the most of the particular teaching situations in which they find themselves – including seminars, tutorials, lectures and laboratories – by using each other as well as the tutor (in the role of "expert witness") as a resource is dealt with in a number of other sub-sections. Indeed the book could be read by students and tutors alike, but because of the title, students will probably not see it as being for them.

As will already be apparent, this is not a "how to teach" book in the traditional sense of teaching. In this book the tutor is most definitely a facilitator of learning. Nonetheless, many of the tips offered are in the power of tutors to carry out, rather than their students, and these range from providing appropriate documentation, setting up appropriate learning structures, using educational technology, to collecting feedback.

I particularly liked the sections on Assessment and Life Skills, the former for its suggestions for demystifying assessment processes and the latter because it goes beyond studying to consider how tutors can help students to cope with and learn from some of life's downsides (eg stress, failure) as well as to prepare for life beyond further or higher education.

Five hundred tips in about 115 pages means that treatment of each is inevitably summary. But if more teachers – from professors to postgraduates – took up and developed these ideas the quality of the student learning experience could only benefit.

*Penny Hatton
Director of Staff and Departmental Development
University of Leeds*

Pooh as Pedagogue

John Tyerman Williams shows that Winnie-the-Pooh has much to offer teachers in HE, as both example and inspiration.

We may, I hope, take for granted that most readers of *The New Academic* are familiar both with Professor Crews's elucidation of the Pooh texts as fit subjects for the most sophisticated literary analysis, and with Benjamin Hoff's revelation of Pooh Bear as a Taoist sage. I fear, however, that they may remain in ignorance of his extraordinary skill in Higher — and indeed in every sort of — Education.

As an example of his pedagogical methodology, I have chosen the way in which he brought his willing but not over-bright student, Piglet, to understand the ontological status of the Heffalump.

Readers will remember that the question of Heffalumps arose during a conversation between Christopher Robin, Piglet and Winnie-the-Pooh. Careful analysis of that conversation shows that Pooh Bear himself knew perfectly well that a Heffalump had no more existence in the real world than a unicorn: less indeed, for we all have a clear picture of what a unicorn would look like, whereas even the genius of E.H. Shepard could only picture an elephant, which a Heffalump certainly wasn't.

After that conversation, Pooh and Piglet walk home together. Our author tells us that they helped each other across the stepping-stones of a stream, and then walked side by side talking "in a friendly way about this and that".

The mutual aid over the stepping-stones and the friendly conversation built up confidence in both: Pooh's confidence in Piglet's capacity, and Piglet's confidence in himself. Near the end of their walk, Pooh said in a very solemn voice:

"Piglet, I have decided something."

"What have you decided, Pooh?"

"I have decided to catch a Heffalump."

It is painful to record that all too many

readers have taken Pooh's statement literally, and have believed he was making a serious declaration of intent. At least I can be sure that all readers of *The New Academic* will see at once that Pooh was throwing out a manifestly absurd statement in the hope that his little student would immediately recognize and comment on its absurdity.

For those less conversant with pedagogic techniques, our author spells out Pooh's real intention. He tells us explicitly that the Great Bear is waiting for Piglet to respond with a sceptical "How?" or a rebutting "Pooh, you couldn't!" It is as well for Pooh's feelings as a teacher that he does not know that Piglet's silence is due, not to an understandable awe of his master, but to the absurd wish that he had thought of this plan himself.

THE BEST SORT OF TRAP

All of us who have any experience of teaching will recognize with sympathy the trap into which Pooh has fallen, a trap into which only the best sort of teacher will fall. He has overestimated his student's ability. What is he to do now? Only one acceptable course is open to him. He must continue the plan to capture a Heffalump until Piglet sees its absurdity for himself.

We can but admire the dedication with which he carries out his programme, piling absurdity on absurdity in the hope that Piglet will realize that absurd means imply an equally absurd end.

First Pooh suggests trapping the Heffalump in a Very Deep Pit. His hopes must have risen when Piglet asks why the Heffalump should fall in, only to be brought low. For Piglet tamely accepts the explanation that the Heffalump would not notice the pit, because he would be looking up at the sky, either to see if it was going to rain or to see if it was

going to stop raining.

Piglet is so blind to reality that he actually digs the Very Deep Pit, while Pooh goes off for the honey that Piglet has suggested as a suitable Heffalump-bait. Here we may note that superficial exegetes have interpreted Pooh's consumption of most of the honey as evidence of greed. Obviously he was not going to waste much good honey on a non-existent Heffalump, and he doubtless needed consolation for his disappointment in Piglet.

Still testing the limits of Piglet's credulity, Pooh says they will need string to lead the captured Heffalumps — plural by now. Piglet does query this, but only because he thinks Heffalumps come when whistled for.

Pooh then gives him the plainest signal yet, saying, "You never can tell with Heffalumps." But Piglet does not take the hint.

Finally Pooh is driven to the desperate measure of preceding Piglet to the Pit, before dawn, and sticking his head in the honey jar. This *reductio ad absurdum* works. Terrified at first by the strange apparition, Piglet is brought to recognize the facts and his own folly.

"Piglet saw what a foolish Piglet he had been, and he was so ashamed of himself that he ran straight off home and went to bed with a headache."

Painful though the lesson was, I think we may be sure that never again would Piglet set out on a wild goose chase for a Heffalump, a mare's nest or chimera in *vacuo bombinans*.

Dr Tyerman Williams' forthcoming book Pooh and the Philosophers (from Methuen in May) demonstrates Pooh's enormous pedagogic skills: in it the Great Bear of Enormous Brain illuminates the whole of Western philosophy. Students of philosophy will, incidentally, find this an invaluable guide which makes reading the earlier philosophers somewhat redundant.

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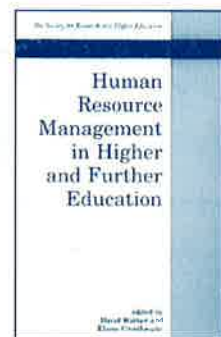
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