

the New Academic

The Magazine of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Summer 1995 • Vol. 4 No. 2



Working Together

**Practical ideas for teams...
Coping with large classes**

SEDA

The Staff and Educational
Development Association,
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SEDA is the principal organisation
in the UK for the promotion of inno-
vation 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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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. Return postage is essential if you wish your script to be returned if not accepted. To speed production, the Editor would appreciate receiving finalised material on floppy disc in 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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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.

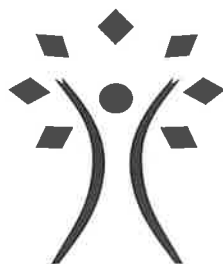
Acronyms used in The New Academic

- 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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Cover photo - R.M. Pomfret

Photographs - R.M. Pomfret (pp.3,5); Mark Loasby (pp.17,18,19); Neville Atkinson (p.9); Bournemouth University (pp.10,11), Napier University (p.16)

"When things settle down..."

We were talking about likely changes to national quality assessment and audit systems when he said "Do you think that, when things settle down..."

I can't remember the rest of his sentence. The phrase "when things settle down" set up a buzzing in my brain which, some weeks later, has not stilled.

Look: forget it. Things won't settle down. Things will only change faster. And I'm delighted about that. Let me try to explain why.

Knowledge is changing faster than ever. Some of what we teach becomes wrong, and much more of it becomes irrelevant, a decreasing interval after we teach it, or even shortly before.

Students are changing. More of them are mature, with complex obligations outside the University. They arrive with more heterogeneous qualifications and experience and knowledge and skills. The distinction between part-time and full-time students is fading. Students have different ways of relating to and using and making knowledge. They have different needs of us.

Work is changing. For 'career' read 'careers' or even 'succession of jobs'. Employers are stressing skills over knowledge; they say

they want communicators, problem-solvers, reflective practitioners, quick learners, quick forgetters.

Technology is changing. Technology is cutting out many of the steps between having an idea and implementing it – "no sooner thought than done", perhaps. Access to information and communication with others are much easier than they were; so is publishing information.

What does this mean for us?

Above all it means we have to find the core of what we believe and what we want to teach. If learning is what remains when we have forgotten most of the facts we have been taught, then let's try to define that learning, declare it, teach it, support the learning of it, and assess and reward it.

We can probably do much of this through the medium of disciplines. And we should, for those many students attracted into higher education by an interest in some particular discipline. But we may need to shift focus at least a little, from the surface of the content to the core of learning.

These are my last words for The New Academic as SEDA Chair. Over five years it has been a delight to see the former Standing Conference on Educational Development and



David Baume

then SEDA expand its activities and its reputation. SEDA has built well on in its initial core activities of conferences and publications, both of which are thriving and developing. More recently SEDA has developed the Fellowships Scheme, defining a standard and offering professional qualifications for staff and educational developers; and then, perhaps SEDA's most spectacular achievement so far, the Teacher Accreditation Scheme, with thirty six institutions of higher education currently actively involved.

I wish my successor(s) as much delight and stimulation and reward and comradeship as I have had. These will make the long hours worthwhile. SEDA is a remarkable organisation. Chairing it has been a privilege. Now that things are going to settle down for me... Oh. I forgot. Things won't settle down. Good!

Working Together

Most of the articles this month have a common theme – that of working together. Lecturers work with very large groups, tutors work with smaller groups, students work together in groups large and small everywhere. Writers tell us about their successful experiments in cooperating with teachers in other disciplines in their own university, or about their successful cooperation with people outside HE altogether – with employers in industry, in the field of law, even with the Patent Office.

Thinking in terms of cooperation and working together has been forced upon many teachers in HE, as student numbers have increased and available resources have diminished. The old image of the individual student buried under a pile of books, and emerging at the end of each year to pour out the results of hours of earnest study onto a series of three-hour papers, has had to be reexamined: if the odd individual does manage to get hold of all those books for long enough to study properly, that can often mean that fellow students are deprived of any opportunity to see them at all. Fewer books, more students – this looks like a recipe for disaster.

Yet who can doubt that some of the creative ways in which HE teachers have dealt with the problems are in fact beneficial to the students? Far from simply relying on handing out simplified notes that will get their students through those final exams, the teachers who have been writing for *The New Academic* demonstrate an inspiring dedication to finding ways to help students find out for themselves.

In this issue, Trevor Habeshaw completes his two-part series on the art of lecturing by

discussing how even the most diverse of large student groups can effectively learn from a well-conducted lecture series. Lecturing may be old hat, as Jennifer Nias suggests, but many still have to teach their large classes this way – so they might as well do it well! Students as well as teachers have a responsibility for their learning, Professor Nias points out, and she recalls the work of the late Jane Abercrombie who showed how working in groups can actually help students learn that all-essential intellectual independence. And as illustration, Gavin Dingwall describes the very simple but effective way in which small tutorial groups were created out of very large subject groups, creating better learning opportunities for students while at the same time almost serendipitously forcing them to learn independently.

Three very different practical examples of working together are gathered in this issue. From Brighton, Ruth Soetendorp describes how students of law and students of engineering worked together on a practical project which demanded each apply theoretical knowledge to the kind of situation they might find in the workplace. From Sunderland, Dave Deeks and Mark Leijk explain how employers worked so closely with them on a business computing project they actually awarded a third of the marks. And from Scotland, Philippa Collins describes how she transformed her business management course to give students experience of working together to solve realistic problems.

It is all very well for teachers of vocationally relevant subjects, you may be thinking. Law, engineering, computing and business management lend themselves to practical cooperative

projects which reflect the kinds of experience graduates will face in their careers. But what about those "pure" academic disciplines like – well, like English Literature for example?

So far, we have not heard from any teachers of Eng.Lit, but it must be only a matter of time. The discipline surely lends itself to cooperative ventures with teachers of history, or psychology, or sociology, not to mention more modern practical subjects like journalism and media studies. In the meantime, in our Autumn issue we shall have an article on teaching yet another "pure" subject – Physics – and you can't get much purer than that. Our contributors show that what's needed is creative imagination.

There are those though who deplore the way HE is changing. In this issue, Alan Saunders strongly criticises new approaches which blur subject boundaries and lead to loss of intellectual rigour. He rightly argues that radical transformation of the curriculum should be accompanied by widespread discussion and clarification of the issues. *The New Academic* should provide a forum for such discussion. Whether you agree or strongly disagree with Alan Saunders, the issue is of great importance to everyone. So let us know. Letters to the Editor which arrive by 1 September will be published in our next issue.

The articles this term are offered as examples of what can be done by teachers who think afresh. We hope they will inspire readers to think how they might apply these ideas in their own subject areas, for we need be limited only by our imagination. *Creativity lives. OK.*

Elizabeth Mapstone

The Art of Lecturing 2

In the second of his articles about lecturing to large classes, *Trevor Habeshaw* discusses the diverse needs that must be met for diverse students, and how this may best be done.

For many universities an economic "Darwinism" pervades the issue of diversity: they have recruited a greater number, and thus a greater diversity, of students to increase their chances of financial survival. But the problems created by this diverse intake remain largely unaddressed, which is odd considering the statistical probability that half the people in the world have the broad personal and intellectual qualities which should enable them to benefit from some kind of further or higher education, if only we can find the way of providing it.

Many universities give prominence in their mission statements to the welcome they extend to a wider range of students. So long as any applicants meet the public entry requirements, they should then experience total acceptance throughout their course both by their teachers and by other students. Individual differences become important only to the extent students may require more support because of them.

The word "diverse" crops up frequently in common room conversations these days. Some talk about diverse ability, by which they mean the range of student academic abilities they encounter. They may also mention various social and cultural factors like class and background, ethnicity, race and age. For other colleagues "diverse" includes gender, sexual orientation or people with a physical disability. Learning style, the most diverse

characteristic all students possess, is rarely mentioned by my colleagues. This is probably for two main reasons: a student's learning style is significantly less visible in the lecture theatre than her/his age, gender, or race; and the preferred mode of teaching for most colleagues (usually some form of the "telling") precludes any consideration of, or concession to, this significant variable.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Should the students be there?

Many of the problems which arise in large diverse classes result from poor course administration or out-of-date design. Since teachers designed these problems into the course in the first place, or allowed them in by lack of forethought or action, they can and should design them out, preferably before the first lecture, and the admissions procedure is a good place to start. Some students just shouldn't be in the class in the first place, but rather on an access or bridging course if they are to have any chance of success, and avoid the painful experience of withdrawal or failure. Such students are likely to make huge demands on staff time and everyone will be better off if they aren't on the course, at least for the present. The various ways in which this problem can be addressed are listed in Box 1 and described fully elsewhere (Habeshaw et al, 1993).



BEFORE YOU PLAN YOUR LECTURES . . .

Students are diverse in many ways, but the problems created by their diversity are less various and can be managed by teachers in ways which are, for the most part, well known. For example, a student may progress slowly because s/he finds the subject matter difficult, or because s/he is from a non-English speaking background, or because s/he has a medical condition which reduces attention span, or because s/he can't afford the text books to study. In general terms such students need the same thing from the teacher: acceptance, understanding and help.

Variable approaches to learning

If we have learned anything from educational research over the last 20 years it is that students have diverse approaches to learning. What can be done in a lecture to cater for those who adopt what we now call a "surface approach" and those who adopt what we call a "deep approach"? Do we know who they are? How many of them there are? Should we assume the median and go from there?

We know that academic departments can influence student performance by the dominant teaching style employed (e.g. if it is predominantly expository or heuristic, see Ramsden, 1981) we know that it is easier to generate surface approaches in students than it is to generate deep approaches, especially in a large lecture (Biggs, 1993). The simple advice has to be that variety in teaching methods and approaches has a better chance of meeting the various learning styles represented in the lecture room. The larger the group, the more you need to introduce such variety since the numbers alone will ensure

Review your course design and administration

Using diversity as one criterion could mean:

- introducing positive action measures into staff recruitment, course leadership, promotion, student admissions, etc;
- ensuring set books and other resources are drawn from a wider field than that involving the usual able-bodied, white middle-class men.

Advertise your course carefully and make clear precisely what it is really like and what demands it imposes on students.

- Sift the applicants carefully, and try to identify students who are likely to

experience great difficulty. As a prior exercise, get your colleagues to review the applications of the students who are having difficulty this year and compare them with those of your more successful students.

- Pretest applicants on those parts of your course that students find most difficult, and which therefore act as a filter, collecting up students who are out of their depth, or who will take up large amounts of staff time. They can then be referred to preparatory courses more suited to their present stage of knowledge and experience.

Box 1

that there are enough students of any particular style in your group to make a variety of approaches pay off for them and you. A "one-shot" strategy is likely to disadvantage many.

Variable ability

Whether or not a student will succeed on a course will usually depend on the two factors of ability and motivation. It is obviously not sufficient for a student just to be able; s/he must also do some work and in HE this work can be hard. Nor is the desire to succeed enough by itself: students must have the necessary intellectual apparatus to make sense of the many different and difficult ideas with which will be presented to them during the course.

Smart teachers will minimise the chance of boredom and possible classroom disruption if they have a few tasks in their bag for the quick students to tackle while they take time to explain things more to the slow ones.

Helping students understand

- **record a 15 minute "theme" lecture**, in association with a one-page diagram showing what your lecture series is about, how the reading fits in, how the tutorials and seminars fit in, and how the assessment fits in with this, and make it available in the library
- **tape your lecture** and make it available to students in the library, resource centre etc.
- **produce and distribute** (in advance if possible) **lecture outlines**
 - to act as advance organisers
 - to make connections with the previous lecture
 - to accommodate students who have other learning styles
 - to identify and link any supplementary reading suggested
- **plan your work in association with set text books** which students can work at in their own time
- **produce annotated reading lists** in which you briefly identify the strengths of this further reading
- **run surgeries** for students i.e. 10 minute slots for one hour each week or fortnight where individuals can bring any special problems with work done
- **help them to think about their own thinking style** by telling them about your own style from time to time
- **tell them about your own critical approach to reading** books, articles etc.

Box 2

Culturally diverse

The term diverse can mean a lot of things and its meaning is often coded to hide secret, difficult or unacceptable stuff. For example, in Australia, "diverse" can mean "non-English-speaking background" which is often another code for Asian; in the UK it can mean "no formal qualifications" and sometimes "black". Glossing the name doesn't hide the problems of course, but teachers have to be careful not to sweep up the stereotype along with the name. A young, bright Asian male student is "diverse" in different ways from a mature female "returner" whose last contact with formal education was a generation ago. He will probably feel more at home than she will in a large audience lecture for example (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991).

Many students from different cultural and subcultural backgrounds will encounter difficulties in adjusting to the expectations and obligations of HE, and more so if they are in a foreign land. The roles and expectations of the teacher and of the student are different from those they have been used to, and for them to adjust properly to each other takes time and can be painful to both. While open talk would probably be the most useful strategy, the difficulty of finding opportunities to do this is often one of the problems.

Problems of adjustment affect students' learning and are usually located in four main areas:

- the teacher's language, particularly pace and accent
- the new, and often difficult, terminology of the subject
- reading and understanding textbooks
- writing and academic or professional communication (in terms of content, grammar, syntax, style and manner)

As a teacher you may find these problems time-consuming and difficult to deal with, but there are a number of ways in which, if you are willing, you can help students who have problems of understanding. Box 2 offers some suggestions.

If "non-English speaking background" can be a hindrance in lectures, it is no less so in the tutorial where natural reserve, accompanied by a strong accent, can weaken the bravest heart. Once again, the willing teacher can be of enormous help if s/he follows some of the suggestions in Box 3. They are designed to help students prepare for and participate in informal group discussion and in formal presentation e.g. of tutorial or seminar papers.

Helping students participate

- **help them to prepare**
 - set clear objectives for the preparatory reading
 - model the way you cover the set reading, e.g. from the text book; give outlines etc.
- **for informal group discussions**
 - treat them as individuals and not as members of particular groups
 - use "icebreakers" to make sure they know and use each other's names
 - discuss and agree ground rules for behaviour in the group
 - tell them in advance about some simple structures you will use in the group discussion to elicit comments, so that they can prepare their comments, e.g. "rounds", and warn them that you will ask them to speak after the next person
 - invite comments from all students, asking them to add comments based on their own cultural experience and background and thus add richness and diversity to the discussion
- **for formal presentations**
 - draw up in advance a clear schedule of tutorial or seminar presenters
 - programme "diverse" students into the schedule only after a pattern has been established by more confident (home-based?) students
 - offer them a chance to go over their presentation with you in advance so they can see if they are on the right track
 - show them how to draw up an outline of their presentation to distribute to the class in advance to offset a difficult accent or poor presentation skills
 - "look after" the speaker a bit until the discussion gets going

Box 3

SEDA in Cyber Space!

Those of you who already know how to surf the Internet, get out your (designer) anoraks. SEDA has joined the cyber community and can be found on the World Wide Web.

Further information about SEDA is available from SEDA's Home Page on:

http://www.ex.ac.uk/public_html/SEDA.html

NOW FOR THE LECTURE

When classes were smaller, teachers usually designed their lectures with specific groups in mind: the epidemiologist would give lectures on epidemiology for nurses, epidemiology for health visitors, epidemiology for doctors and so on. Today's larger classes are usually heterogeneous and include students from a range of disciplines all timetabled together in one room at one time and taught as one group. Here there are few concessions to the requirements of particular student groups.

If you find yourself in this position you have no choice but to limit your lectures to the core material of your subject area and you will have to count on students to make connections for themselves and apply the lecture material to their own disciplines. The various ways in which you can help them to do this are shown in Box 4.

Making links

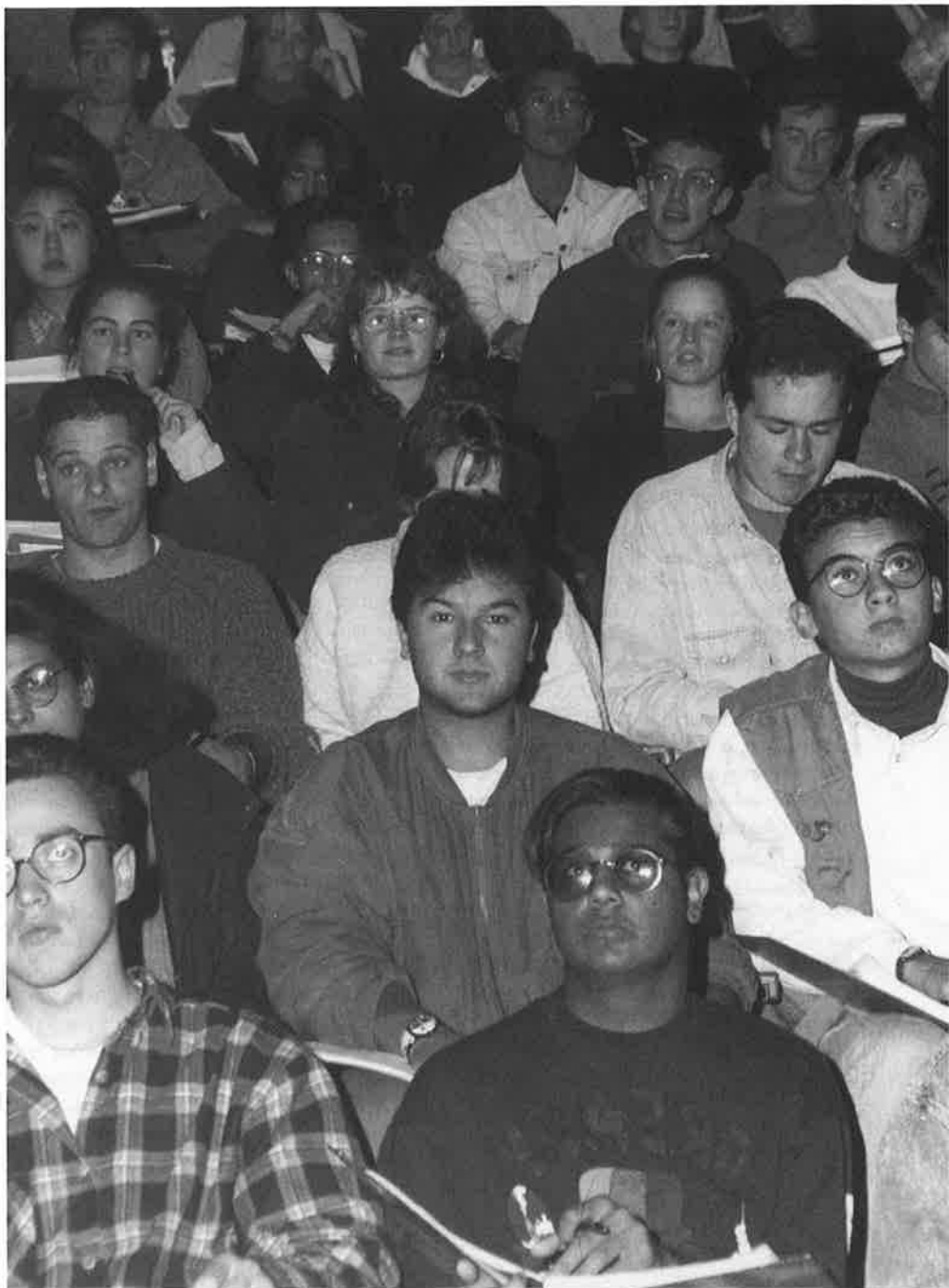
- If the students have texts chosen because of their relevance to their discipline, you can look through these texts for opportunities to make appropriate connections with your own lectures and point them out.
- Schedule breaks in your lecture in which students are asked to think of examples from their own discipline areas to illustrate what you have been saying. They can discuss them later in cognate groups or in their seminars and tutorials.
- Seminars, tutorials or workshops which follow lectures can be run by tutors from different discipline areas so that they can provide examples of applications to their own discipline of each new theory or principle.

Box 4

STUDENT NEEDS

In small classes, lecturers get to know the students and can respond flexibly to their individual needs. In large classes, there are often more students who need help, and they are often more difficult to identify. In very large classes it is no longer possible for tutors to offer the same level of support to all students.

What is needed is a system for specifying broad categories of student need and funnelling the students so that those who need help at each stage can be identified and given the appropriate support. The system described in Box 5, if used effectively, is economical of staff time because it will ensure that most students will not use the "expensive" stages. The system operates in four stages, but not necessarily in four consecutive teaching sessions.

**Categorising student needs**

- Stage 1 is a weekly lecture which all students are required to attend.
- Stage 2 is a follow-up test and feedback session which, again, all students are required to attend. The tests can be of any kind so long as they are capable of being marked there and then by the students themselves so that they can get immediate feedback. A variant is for the lecture to be followed by a computer-marked multiple choice test, the results of which will identify areas in which students are experiencing difficulty. Those who do well enough in the tests need not attend until the following week. Students who fail the tests continue to Stage 3.
- Stage 3 is a problem-solving session where the tutor responds to students' queries and helps them with their difficulties, perhaps taking them through some of the lecture material again and giving them examples to work on. Teaching assistants, demonstrators, or in some cases final year students can also help in these sessions. Students who are now coping need not attend until the following week. Those who still have specific problems continue to Stage 4.
- Stage 4 is a surgery, held by the tutor for individual students. But there should be very few remaining who still need help.

Box 5

TOWARDS GREATER STUDENT AUTONOMY

Conventionally, large diverse first-year classes are taught cheaply, with a minimum of tutorials and very little personal contact or feedback. This is done so that more resources, including staff time, can be invested in final-year students, who tend to be very expensive to teach: dissertations are generally supervised individually and specialist options are taught in small classes.

This strategy has the drawback that the first-year experience encourages students to be dependent. They become used to teacher-centred methods and are unable fully to take advantage of the opportunities for autonomy offered in the final year.

One way to avoid this is to invest more teacher time in the first year developing students' independent learning skills so that increasingly they can cope with the demands of specialisation and exploit the opportunities for independent study. If they are able to take responsibility for themselves, access their own information and learn from one another, they will need less supervision and can be taught more cheaply. For this to work, it is crucial to get it right in the planning of year one. A first-year programme, aimed at developing students' independent learning skills, could include the elements listed in Box 6 (see also Gibbs, 1992).

BACK TO BASICS

Many of the problems teachers and students experience in large lecture classes can be addressed by returning to the basic principles of effective lecturing. For the individual lecturer the more formal the presentation then the truer this is.

For the student who may have to sit through several formal lectures in each day, individual psychology begins to take its toll and the student's effective ability to learn decreases. For this reason, there is a limit to the level of formality which can be imposed.

In my previous article (*The New Academic*, Spring 1995) I outlined a number of structuring devices which can be used with benefit in formal lectures. Various activities were suggested, together with methods of implementation; if incorporated into the large lecture session, variations in approach can stimulate students' interest, help them to remain alert and thus maintain the learning effectiveness of the lecture method over time.

The big problem for the world to solve in the next millennium is that of how we can manage to live together (including "teach" and "learn") in the large, diverse group. Faced with a problem of this magnitude, the suggestions in this paper will bring little comfort to the conservative-minded, but in education as in life, the solutions are limited only by the extent of our imagination.

Promoting independent learning

- **Study skills**

Students need to be able to take useful notes, read effectively and efficiently, write well structured essays and reports, and have the confidence to cope with exams.

- **Information skills**

It is essential that students acquire the skills of accessing, extracting and processing information if they are to be able to study independently. Library staff will probably be interested in working with you on programmes to help students acquire such skills.

- **Problem-solving skills**

Students need to develop problem-solving skills, initially to deal with the curriculum and subsequently as competent practitioners in their chosen careers.

- **Taking responsibility**

You can help students develop self-direction and judgement by getting them to set their own learning goals and practical tasks,

monitor their own progress and correct their own work against given criteria.

- **Feedback skills**

To study independently of their tutors, they need to know how to give one another feedback. You can help them to clarify this by inviting them to draw up a set of guidelines. Give them a few minutes to note down examples of helpful and unhelpful feedback received in the past from their teachers. Then ask them to pool suggestions for the guidelines, which you can put together on a handout.

- **Self-help groups**

Students need practical and personal support. They can get this from one another if they form self-help groups, study groups, special interest groups or other kinds of student group. They will welcome your help in setting up and advice on how to maintain a successful group (for further details, see Habeshaw et al, 1989).

Box 6

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STOP PRESS NEWS FROM SEDA CONFERENCE

News came in from the SEDA AGM, held on Saturday, 13 May 1995, just as we were about to go to press. Here are some of the highlights:

New Co-Chairs:

Sally Brown, University of Northumbria
Carole Baume, Oxford Brookes University

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Revolving Tutorials

Gavin Dingwall offers a practical solution to the problem of large numbers, limited resources and student participation: revolving tutorials. He teaches Criminal Justice, but this idea looks sensible for many subject areas.

More students combined with a reduction in resources led us to consider alternatives to the traditional tutorial for our small group classes in Criminal Justice. There were three main considerations. First, we wanted to maximise student participation. Second, modularisation meant that we had to rationalise our lectures in each course, yet we felt it would be desirable to include all the topics that had been in the course to date. Finally, in a multi-disciplinary subject that relies heavily on a wide range of materials, we wanted to increase the students' access to library resources.

Our solution was to "revolve" tutorials so that in a given week there would be three different tutorials, each taken by a third of the student groups. In each term there would be three tutorial classes, so that by the end of term, each student would have had the same three tutorials but in a different order. For example, in the first term the tutorials were concerned with the following topics: the perception of penal crisis, victims of crime and the reporting of crime in the media. The rota was as follows:

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
Group 1	Crisis	Victims	Media
Group 2	Crisis	Victims	Media
Group 3	Victims	Media	Crisis
Group 4	Victims	Media	Crisis
Group 5	Media	Crisis	Victims
Group 6	Media	Crisis	Victims

There were several advantages to this approach:

- **Reduction in pressure on resources**

As only a third of the students taking the course needed the same materials at the same time there was less pressure. This meant that we could place the material in the main library rather than the short loan collection, thereby giving students easier access to it. The reduced demand allowed students to spend longer with the materials and to work at their own pace.

- **A greater variety of materials could be made available**

As fewer students were working on each topic at a given time we needed fewer copies of each item. This meant that we could then increase the range of materials available. In the "Crisis" tutorial we wanted the students to understand the interrelationship between a number of factors that have led to the belief that the criminal justice system is in a state of crisis. With more material available, I asked students in the same group to read different materials: we were able to explore a variety of factors, and this was clearly beneficial to all concerned.

- **New approaches could be adopted**

For example, one of the tutorials related to the way in which newspapers report crime. We managed to get 28 different newspapers from across the United Kingdom on the same day. Each student was assigned two or three newspapers which they had to analyse independently and then report their findings to the rest of the group. Conclusions were then drawn by the students about the manner in which crime is reported. This exercise involved the students' working both alone and in a group and gave them the opportunity to present their findings formally. Similarly, the tutorial about victims of crime took the form of a debate. The increase in library resources allowed the students to find more relevant material to allow them to prepare for the discussion.

- **Increased student preparation**

As the student programme worked on rotation, we tried to make the tutorials separate from the lectures so as not to disadvantage groups who had to prepare a given tutorial prior to being lectured in this area. This meant that students could not rely only on lecture notes to participate in tutorials. The tutor could however relate the tutorial topic to what the students had

covered in lectures recently, and therefore make students aware of the interrelationship between different parts of the course. The students were made aware that they could be examined on tutorial topics in the examination and, as the tutorials were separate from the lectures, the students prepared well for each tutorial knowing that they could be examined on the topic at a later date.

- **More variety for the tutor**

Only two members of staff take tutorials in Criminal Justice. In a given tutorial week we both have six groups. Instead of having to discuss the same topic six times we now discuss three different topics twice. As well as the obvious benefits to our sanity, the variety in my experience made my approach more lively with, I hope, a corresponding benefit to the students.

In summary, I would happily recommend "revolving" tutorials. The increased availability of resources has meant that the students can come to tutorials better prepared and can allow more imaginative and student-centred methods of teaching to be adopted. Despite initial confusion about the structure, the students have taken to the scheme readily and have produced excellent work. Although at first it involves considerable planning – all three tutorials have to be given out at the same time – it gives staff more time during term as the tutorials have been written, distributed and prepared before the cycle commences. "Revolving" tutorials would appear to be one positive way to beat the problems posed by more students and less resources while at the same time increasing the student learning experience.



Gavin Dingwall lectures in Law at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. He also serves as the Departmental Outlook Officer.

Developing Intellectual Independence

Jennifer Nias discusses the urgent need to help students develop responsibility for their own learning, and shows how the model provided by Jane Abercrombie can help make "group work" cultivate independent learners

Why learn independence? There are both practical and philosophical reasons why, as university teachers, we should be concerned to develop students' intellectual independence.

Practically, the rise in student numbers and the pressures of research productivity make it important that students should not regard their tutors as the only source of learning and guidance. Also, since many employers value initiative and a capacity for independent problem-solving, ex-students may be disadvantaged in the job market if they have learnt always to wait for direction from those whom they regard as their supervisors.

Philosophically, well-established traditions exist which propose the development of autonomy in the learner as one of the main goals of education. Whatever the pragmatic pressures upon universities, we are engaged upon an educational process and should take cognisance of these traditions.

One of our aims should, then, be to reduce the dependent attitudes of many students towards their own learning. However, two of the commonest teaching methods used in higher education do little to fulfil this aim.

The lecture, with its roots in a period when books were so scarce and precious that scholars needed to report their ideas and content to students through the spoken word, is inappropriate today. However its persistent use tends still to reinforce the perceived superiority of lecturers.

The tutorial is often little better. It derives in part from the Socratic dialogue in which a teacher guides, through questions, the thinking of one or more students. However, present resources seldom permit tutors the luxury of regular, extended individual discus-

sions with undergraduates (sometimes not even with postgraduates). In addition, the habits which both tutors and students tend to bring to the tutorial can too easily allow it to become a mini-lecture.

A third method - "group work" - is sometimes advanced as a way of reducing student dependence upon their teachers. However, as several university teachers make clear, (e.g. Abercrombie & Terry, 1979; Bridges, 1979; Jaques, 1991), groups may be of many different kinds and may be used for varying purposes. There is no guarantee that "group work" enhances, or is intended to enhance the autonomy of the learner or that it reduces the dominance of the tutor.

THE "ANDRAGOGICAL MODEL"

When dealing with this problem, I have found extremely helpful the writing and the "andragogical model" provided by M.L.J. Abercrombie.

Jane Abercrombie (1909-84) was a biologist who spent most of her professional life teaching university students and teachers to perceive and think more clearly and, in their varied professional settings, to act more efficiently. To the pursuit of these goals she brought the scientific rigour of her training as a zoologist, a lifelong enthusiasm for teaching and the insights that she derived from working as a member and facilitator in group analytic groups. Indeed, the distinctive characteristic of her research and teaching was that it used group analytic principles and methods, especially "associative" discussion, in educational settings and to educational ends (see, in particular, Abercrombie, 1989 and Nias, 1993).

Early in her career, Jane Abercrombie

began to question what she called "the crippling effect of too great a faith in authority" upon scientific progress. She noticed that her students found difficulty in observing accurately and interpreting objectively and argued that this was because their perceptions were shaped by their assumptions. These included the belief, derived from their childhood experiences, that knowledge and skills were transmitted downwards, by persons who were older, bigger, stronger and wiser than they were: that is, traditional education was hierarchical in structure, process and often content. Since university teachers, too, had learned these assumptions, they tended to perpetuate them, often in tacit collusion with their students.

The authority dependence which students and teachers thus encouraged, albeit unconsciously, was, Abercrombie powerfully argued, at the heart of many of the difficulties that adults experienced in learning. It prevented them from making independent judgements, reduced their capacity to make productive use of new information and inhibited creativity.

Her answer was to introduce into her own teaching, and to explore through several research projects between 1948 and 1980, an approach to "group work" which she learnt from the group analyst, S.H. Foulkes. She believed and in her teaching demonstrated that productive peer interaction could take place in a supportive but challenging atmosphere, under the guidance of a leader who was also a member of the group. Through such "associative" discussion, group members could learn about their own unconscious assumptions and attitudes and begin to discover how and why they might change them.

COMMENT

SELF ASSESSMENT:
A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Having recently completed a 4-year degree at a University where innovative teaching methods are increasing, I have many tales to tell about self, group and peer assessment techniques, and in general, they are all positive. Of course, I was as sceptical as the next person when first asked to mark my own work and was convinced that everyone would give each other As in the group assessment, but my fears were unfounded.

Yes, it's difficult. I think what was prominent in everyone's mind was that the mark awarded would effect everyone's final degree in the end. Students are sensible creatures underneath. They understand that not everyone can get good marks, and that if they want to be rewarded for their work, they must ensure that standards are maintained.

One piece of self assessment in my third year constituted the most valuable learning experience in the whole of my degree. The assessment constituted 10% of a Catering module in Foodservice Operations (0.55% of my total degree). We were asked to identify areas in which our performance was weak, to work on improving ourselves in these areas throughout the module, and to write a learning contract stating how we felt we could show our improvement. There were 20 marks at stake.

At first this seemed like a pretty trivial piece of work, but when I actually sat down to write the contract I realised its full potential. For the first time I took control of my learning. I participated in presentations (rather than just electing to put the OHPs up), I worked in the kitchen (something I was terrified of), I improved my sugar craft skills, I became more assertive and confident. And once tried, I wondered why I'd been afraid of doing those things before as they seemed so much easier than I'd expected.

I am still benefiting from that experience. If something seems frightening, I do it anyway and it invariably turns out alright. Proof of this self development is my current position. I arrived at University quite shy. I'm now the Academic & Residential Affairs Officer for our Students' Union, which requires me to be quite the opposite! I hope I have pointed out the potentials of this type of learning. The benefits that can be reaped are endless and I strongly believe students will react well to it, provided they are well supported.

Sarah Banks,

Graduate in Catering Management and Computer Studies, Oxford Brookes University.



Jane Abercrombie (1909-84)

whose insights into dependence on authority inspired this article

This is not to suggest that Abercrombie was opposed to authority *per se*. She dismissed *laissez-faire* approaches to learning as ineffectual and potentially inequitable, and frequently upheld teachers' responsibility to be authorities in their own areas of study. Moreover she showed, with compelling illustrations from the work of artists and technologists, that innovators could not break with the past unless they were rooted in it.

Creativity involved both understanding one's individual and cultural heritage and having the courage to transcend and, on occasion, to destroy it.

At a time when university teachers are seeking to encourage peer interaction and peer-supported learning, M.L.J. Abercrombie's work has much to offer both sets of participants in the educational process. Her insights into authority dependence and into the use and conduct of group work are profound and scholarly, yet practical and down-to-earth. They also serve to remind us that teaching groups is an essential part of our andragogy and that we can, as teachers, continue as learners to develop this craft skill.

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Patenting Innovation

Ruth Soetendorp describes an innovative teaching programme which gives engineers and lawyers practical experience of communication skills whilst discovering how original engineering designs can best be protected and exploited. This interdisciplinary approach may inspire teachers in other subject areas.

Two innovative developments at Bournemouth University are ensuring that both engineers and intellectual property lawyers get a simulated taste of real life in their degree programmes. Undergraduate Engineers don't expect to train to be patent agents, and undergraduate Intellectual Property Law students don't often get the chance of real client contact.

Engineers who whilst young and impressionable have their consciousness raised in the matter of patents are more likely to benefit from an awareness of the value of patents in their future career. Intellectual property lawyers who realise early on that they are only as good as the benefits they create for their clients will have learnt an important lesson.

That has been the philosophy behind introducing the integrating assignment to the BSc Engineering Business Development degree, and the client advice letter to the Intellectual Property Practice option of the LLB (Business Law) degree.

In their second year, the engineers are expected to develop an innovative product, which may incorporate an inventive step. The students are expected to develop their own brief from organised idea generation sessions with peers and tutors. These briefs are translated into a design solution, a working prototype, a marketing plan, a product liability report, and a patent application.

With the support of the Patent Office, the Portsmouth Patent Library and a local patent agent, the students enjoy a programme that takes them gently into the world of intellectual property, and finishes with their having taken on board some of the subtleties of applying for a patent.

HOW IT WORKS

At the beginning of the academic year, the Patent Office sends down one of their very able team of user friendly officers to put on a presentation using slides and video of the work of the Patent Office, and the other areas of intellectual property, including copyright, design rights and trade marks. Each student is left with a copy of the materials pack on intellectual property, and the work of the Patent Office. The library stocks the Patent Office videos on patents, copyright, design rights and trade marks, together with the Patent Office Training Packages on interactive laser disc.

Once the engineering students have agreed their briefs with tutors, an initial design solution is produced. The brief and design solution are then sent to the Patent Library at Portsmouth. The librarians do a preliminary search, so that when the students visit the library a few weeks later, they have a clear starting point for searching the collection to see the extent of prior art.

This exercise gives students the opportunity to see how innovative their design solutions actually are. There is great excitement for any student who finds that no patent comes near their design solution. And a timely reminder to keep the idea secret if they are to take commercial advantage of it.

There is also a valuable lesson to be learnt for the student who finds the idea represented, in virtually every detail, by a published patent. If this were a real life situation, they learn how they could have saved time and money not 'reinventing the wheel' by checking first with the Patent Library.

For the purpose of the exercise, no one is barred from going through with the integrating assignment because their design solution is not novel, or appears to be



obvious, as such a strict requirement would be impractical. But lectures and seminars covering patentability draw for illustration on students' 'inventions', and here the obvious and those with no inventive step are useful examples for discussion purposes.

BEING SPECIFIC

The University has recently taken delivery of the Patent Office Training Inter Active Laser Training Packages '*Making it Happen*'. These are proving invaluable for the next stage of the assignment. The students have to write their own patent specification, including description, claims, abstract and drawings.

The Patent Office '*How to produce a U.K. patent*' has a simple example of the patent specification for the demountable box trailer, which serves as a basic model. The interactive package is used by the student to get further clarification about the wording of claims, and the specification as a whole, as well as taking the opportunity to investigate other aspects of patent law which the course does not have time to cover.

A local patent agent visits the students at about the time they are considering the wording of their specifications. His presentation works through an actual client's file, which, with the client's permission, has been reproduced to give the students an idea of the role the Patent Agent plays in the interaction with the Patent Office in pursuit of a patent.

Those students who have done some work on their claims get the benefit of his advice on their suitability – and the free advice is a good incentive to get ahead with this stage of the exercise.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW

Meanwhile, the Intellectual Property Practice (I.P.P.) final year law students follow a one

year option course, which gives them a basic grounding in all areas of intellectual property. We wanted to test their ability to apply their knowledge in a real life situation, which would require them to draw out relevant data from a client, and then decide how best to protect it.

Fortunately, the I.P.P. students and the engineers were virtually equal in number. It was easy to pair them up. The I.P.P. student was furnished with the engineers description and drawings and was required to make contact with the engineer to discuss the design solution further.

The I.P.P. student was required to prepare a letter describing the appropriate aspects of intellectual property relevant to the invention (but not to advise specifically on the patent specification). The benefit to the I.P.P. student was the requirement to write about the law in terms understandable by the legal layperson, as well as the challenge to elicit information, or suggest developments that had not been considered e.g. trade marks, international protection.

BENEFITS TO ALL

The benefit to the engineers was increased awareness of relevant aspects of intellectual property. They were required to submit a copy of the lawyers' letter with the integrating assignment documentation. The contact also gave both groups an opportunity to practice client-consultant skills.

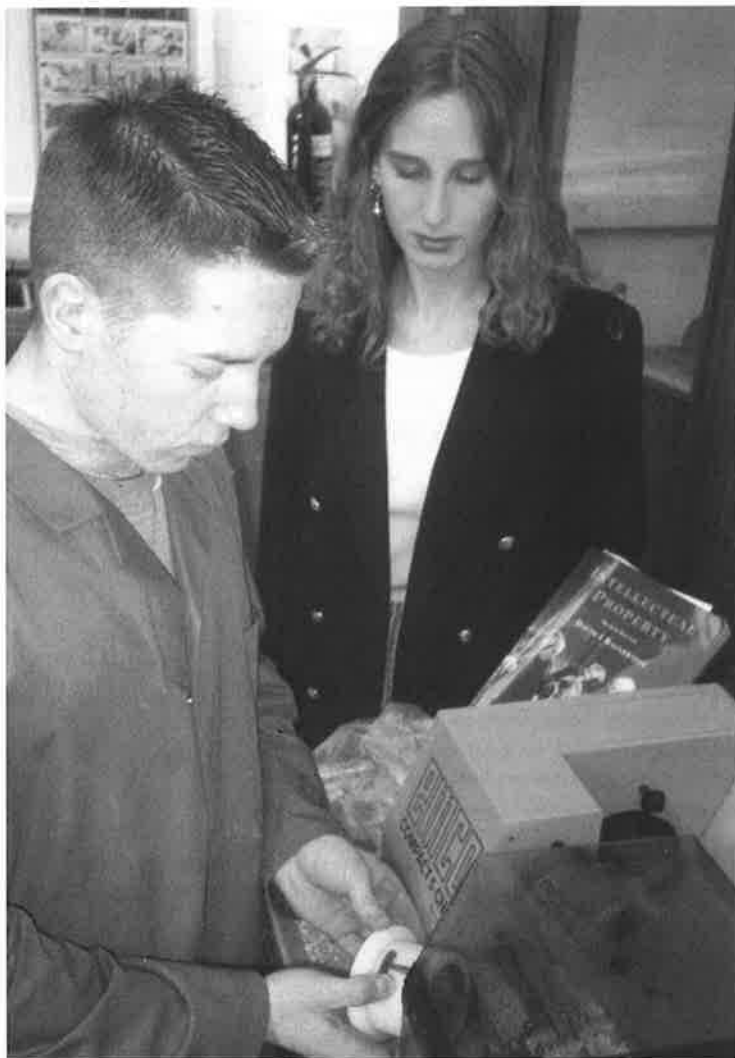
Involvement of the students in deciding the criteria for assessment of the letters and descriptions of design solutions will also prove useful. This should help the lawyers avoid jargon, too much irrelevant detail, and oversight of aspects that are of great practical relevance. The engineers should learn to avoid poorly presented design solutions with insufficient detail and clarity.

This year the Patent Agent commented on all the lawyers' letters, and participated in the assessment of the engineers design presentations. In future years we hope to increasingly involve the external contributors in our development of the two degree programmes.

The success of these innovative approaches has recently received additional recognition by the decision of the firm of Urquhart Dykes and Lord, Patent Attorneys, to offer two cash prizes, which will be known as the Urquhart Dykes and Lord Awards to the best Engineering Business Development and Intellectual Property Practice law students.

Ruth Soetendorp is Director of Studies in the Department of Finance and Law at Bournemouth University. She teaches Intellectual Property Practice in the School of Law. The work described in this article has been developed with members of the Department of Product Design and Manufacture at the University.

Business Law Student Lisa Howell with her 'client', Engineering Student Paul Townsend. This innovative course teaches important lessons about the practical relevance of their different disciplines.



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A Practical Strategy

As a practising manager/director turned lecturer, *Philippa Collins* is concerned about how young people are to understand the complexities of management without practical experience when it is impossible to provide placements for most students. Here she describes the course she has designed.

When I was first asked to teach Business Strategy, I had plenty of experience in giving presentations to hard-nosed business people, and had given seminars to post-graduates, but I knew my learning curve as a lecturer was going to be steep. I was shocked to find out how steep. Having now completed my "apprenticeship" I reflect uneasily on how we prepare our youngsters for business.

My colleagues advised me to use the standard textbook, and one was kind enough to give me a synopsis of the course he had formerly taught. I was not satisfied with either. I had spent years as a practising manager, and during my PhD had been put at the 'coal-face' by my sponsor (a major multinational computer company), so that I could not forget that my research was to have a practical use. I could not see the point of teaching sterile tools and techniques, and a syllabus based on the traditional view of organisations. Business has moved on. Hamel and Prahalad (1993) amongst others were already suggesting new approaches to strategy, and continue to do so. Yet my students were expected to learn the traditional canon. They would leave university with certificates to say that they were trained and competent in business matters – and that training would not be applicable to the modern world.

I decided to change the syllabus. Rather than base the course purely on the Final examination, I would have 25% coursework. The latter would be in three parts:

1. A Personal Plan

- Objectives: Introduction to planning.
 Personal experience of long-term planning
 Building block towards Coursework Parts 2 & 3.

Will this 38-year-old woman succeed in running her own electronic equipment hire business? Teams of students evaluate her future in a variety of potential business operations as part of their management course. This is a practical imaginative strategy applicable to many subject areas.



2. Management Report

- Objectives: Practical experience of:
- planning
 - teamwork
 - report writing
 - data search
 - evaluating information

3. A Company Profile

Objective: Understanding the strategic plan and objectives of a particular company [industry], combining the concepts taught in the course with experience gained from previous coursework.

PRACTICAL INSIGHTS

The aim of this module was to give students an insight into the practicalities of business: an exercise that demands teamwork, team-thinking, and research into real business needs. At the end of the exercise they would be aware of the difficulties of setting up a business, thus complementing the theoretical ideas that they find in the textbooks. The exercise requires good planning skills: therefore the students have to think long-term, and appreciate the need to prepare contingency plans. They usually find this extremely difficult.

As a preparation for the module, they should be given exercises in team-working skills, and the supervisor will have to be sympathetic to the needs of the groups involved, and the personality clashes that may occur. The students should not be allowed to choose with whom they work. They should experience the norms found in business life, one of which is that you cannot choose your colleagues. Nor should they be allowed to drop out because they do not like their fellow group members, but anyone opting out of work would be penalised in the marks.

There is yet more value if the module is carried out on a cross-departmental basis. Students then find that arranging meetings is difficult, because they have different timetables. This becomes another useful learning exercise.

THE LECTURE COURSE

I made other changes too. I began with the BBC Horizon film, "Nice Guys Finish First". This discusses the need to have a personal strategy, and discusses Axelrod's Theory of Cooperation (1971). As most of the students had spent two years learning about competition, and many were embarking on a marketing course, also based on competitive advantage, this introduction to the idea of

consensus contradicted all their preconceived ideas. My aim was to complement the lectures I gave on developing a personal plan. I asked them all to read Sterling Livingston's (1971) article "The Myth of the Well-Educated Manager". I also suggested that they read Chris Argyris' (1991) article, "Teaching Smart People How to Learn".

As so many were studying marketing as a special subject, I decided to avoid the standard textbook approach, and for the first term talked about the contribution to strategic thinking of a number of famous authors. My main theme was that some writers have had an inordinate influence on the way we think about strategy, and that with the changing nature of business, it was useful to challenge some of the sacred cows. It was important to question what was taught and written about, not just to learn it by rote.

During the second term, I concentrated on practical issues of implementation. Once again, I chose topics which were current: business process re-design; partnership sourcing; quality matters; use of information technology. When they leave college, these are the kinds of issues with which the students will be involved, not high-level strategy. To give more reality to this part of the course, I invited a number of speakers from business and manufacturing.

The students were given the following (slightly edited) instructions:

Part 1:

Prepare a career/business plan, using the framework taught in Lecture 1. This should look ahead at least 5 years. You need not include any financial details unless you so wish, but SWOT analysis and future training needs should be analysed.

Sources of information are important, and you should include as many different types of source material as you can. This can be attached as appendices. If the actual material is not available or too expensive, list the possibilities in detail.

Think big. What is your *potential*?

Are you planning what you really want to do, or what you think is "expected" of you? Have you been honest with yourself?

Prepare a contingency plan. Be patient, and do not be disappointed if it takes a long time to achieve what you really want.

Part 2:

You are to advise a client who wishes to start a new business. This fictitious client has the following profile:

Female, aged 38

Degrees in History and Business Management

Experience in publishing, information technology and coal industry.

Management posts held: Office Manager; Editor of House Journal; Training Adviser. Now redundant, with £30,000 redundancy package. 5-bedroomed house. No family commitments.

You will be divided into teams, and each team will be given a separate type of business on which to report. Each team will include at least one student who has been out on placement for a year, and members of each departmental group. In this way, previous experience and knowledge can be shared.

- ESTATE AGENCY
- FRANCHISE
- RESTAURANT
- BOOKSHOP
- GARAGE
- SECURITY ALARMS
- SELLING INSURANCE
- PLANT NURSERY/HERB GARDEN
- ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT HIRE
- CONSULTANCY
- RENTED ACCOMMODATION

When you have completed your feasibility study, you will give a presentation of not more than 15 minutes to the whole class, outlining the advice that you intend to give your client.

The class and tutor will then offer advice and further ideas – you may have overlooked some aspects or not investigated some matters sufficiently thoroughly.

The team will then complete the report, type it up and hand it in before the end of term. If possible, look at company reports and 'official' reports – note the formality in the style. This is not an essay.

You will not be able to do a cash flow/profit & loss account etc, but some indication of capital requirements should be given. Concentrate on sources of capital/loans etc.

NB You may well decide that this business is a non-starter, but if so, you must state your reasons for this conclusion. What difference would it make if there was no recession? what if given 'carte blanche'? If the fictitious character could not do this, what qualities are missing?

Part 3:

A company profile: write an extended essay maximum. 5,000 words. Credit will be given for appendices showing other work, e.g. a collection of press cuttings.

DID IT WORK?

Anyone with more lecturing experience would have realised that the marking load resulting from this set of exercises was going to be horrendous, especially with large classes (I had 74 students in this exercise). However, I have to say that I thoroughly enjoyed the marking, and this pleasure made the task much more satisfying than marking 74 essays on the same topic.

The presentations were for me the highlight of the course. The professionalism achieved by some of the groups bettered some of the work I have seen by senior managers. It was also *fun*. I think we sometimes forget that students will learn far more if they are enjoying themselves, yet Final year students take their work ever so seriously. Any method which can increase their pleasure in learning should be encouraged.

There were, however, some difficult lessons to learn. The students were used to being, in their words, "spoon-fed". Lecturers would give them sets of notes, and the general message was that if they learned their notes, they would get good results. Giving them exercises which were not based on textbooks, and for which there were no set answers, worried them enormously. It took away their security. When I was talking about change management, and said that the way that I had changed the course was equivalent to introducing change in business, they all nodded vigorously. They were feeling the pain. They were desperately anxious to know their marks, and could not take on board the idea that they should know whether or not they had done a good job. Only one student had read Pirsig's (1974) classic, and had thought about personal responsibility for quality of work. Some students actually commented that I was "making them think". I was fortunate that they were intelligent enough to come and discuss their views in tutorials. I learned a great deal from this about undergraduate needs. I was shocked to find how few lecturers (according to the students) were really stretching them. There was quantity, but I wondered about the quality.

I did demand a lot from them. But when they go out to work, they will find that there is no-one to do the thinking for them. There were students who wanted me to give them the page numbers of textbooks which matched my notes, and those who asked for copies of my handouts as they did not wish to make notes; those that tried to rely solely on one textbook for their information; some who said that they did not like reading books and did not seem to understand that you come to university to read for a degree; and those who relied on lecturers to give them neat sets of notes that they could [should] have been making themselves from books in

the library. I wonder how well prepared those students will be for management?

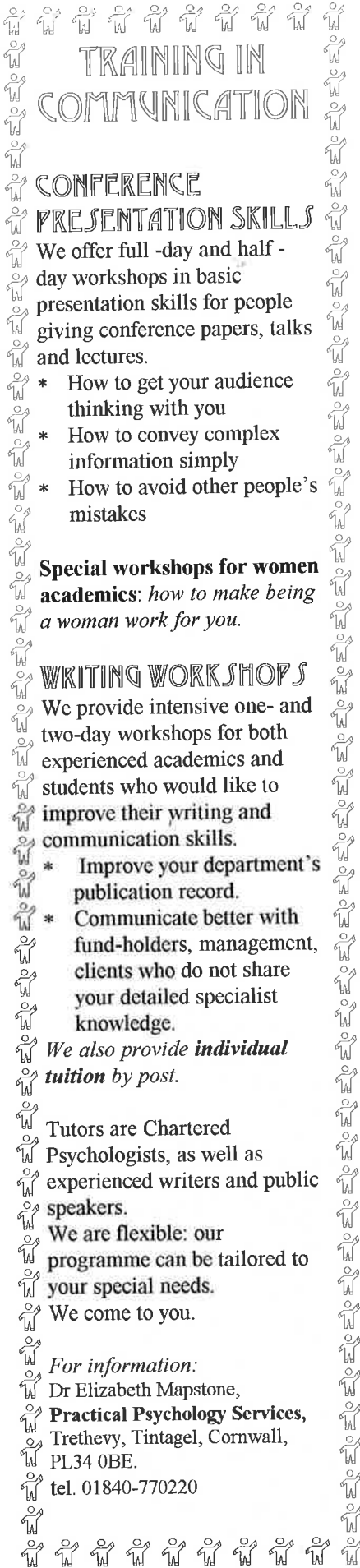
I enjoy lecturing, and have no wish to change my job. Yet I am dismayed by the current lack of resources which discourages creativity in our teaching. An article by Das in *Long Range Planning* drew attention to the need to understand the time dimension in strategic planning. My coursework was intended to give the students just that: an insight into the difficulties of looking ahead, developing a plan, yet maintaining sufficient flexibility and agility to change when circumstances so demand. Many lecturers have had no business experience: they have gone to university straight from school, then remained in academic life. Without experience of the vast-ranging changes in business in the last few years, even those who have worked in business cannot appreciate the rate of change. Some of these old hands think that I am totally misguided in my efforts. Some claim that there is nothing we can do: we are in the numbers game now. Yet one of my colleagues who shared the course with me lectured on lateral thinking and leadership. He, too, is trying to make his teaching relevant.

Since writing this article, I have letters from several students on that course, thanking me for teaching them so much that is proving "useful" in their new jobs. One claims that my seminar on Business Process Re-design helped him to get a job, as the company was surprised that he was so "up-to-date". One even advised me when teaching the next cohort to "hit them hard": she had found the course very challenging, but once out at work discovered the relevance of what she had learned.

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Real World Computing

Dave Deeks and Mark Lejk explain how local employers are involved in group projects for Business Computing students: employers even award 30% of the marks. Teachers in other subject areas may find some useful and practical ideas.

The Business Computing course at the University of Sunderland has a strong vocational element. Nearly all our degree students undertake an industrial placement year and, after graduating, the vast majority enter the computing world as programmers, analyst/programmers or system developers. We therefore feel it important that our students get a taste of the "real world" in their studies and we have developed a full module called the Information Systems Group Project (ISGP) which all Business Computing students undertake in their second year.

The Project involves a number of "real world" features including employer involvement, large teams, project management, handling real money and competition.

EMPLOYER INVOLVEMENT

Two senior computing professionals have been involved in the ISGP: Alistair Hain of Bretts Oils, Gateshead, and Chris Merchant of Courtaulds Coatings, Felling. Each professional prepared an *Invitation to Tender (ITT)* for computer systems which they required. These *ITTs* were real and identical to ones which would be sent to software houses for commercial development.

The 250 students studying the module were divided into two main groups, and each half was then sub-divided into teams of about ten. The teams in each half of the class were allocated one of the *Invitations To Tender* and were required to compete in producing solutions.

The employer representatives started the module by giving a presentation to the students about what they required.

The first 6 weeks of the module were then spent producing a *Response to Tender*. This written report was backed up with a presentation by each team to an audience including the employer, the tutors and fellow students. A quarter of the marks for this module were allocated at this stage – 15% by the tutors and 10% by the employers. From this stage, a winning *Response to Tender* was selected by each employer.

The second stage of the module was spent developing the required system using database software. A full system was produced including working software, user manuals and technical manuals. Posters were also produced summarising the breadth, suitability and control of the techniques used by the students. Again, the employers assessed the final systems, awarding 20% of the marks for the module.

LARGE TEAMS

All the students studying the module had already been through a previous module on structured systems analysis and design described in Mark Lejk's article (*New Academic*, Summer 1994). In that module students undertook a team-based assignment where they were allowed to choose their own team-mates and the team size was 4.

In the ISGP, the team size was about 10 and we wanted balanced teams as far as possible. We therefore had to engineer the team membership by looking at past performance in systems analysis and programming. As a result, we ended up with teams with a good spread of analysis and programming expertise.

Teams of 10 are difficult to manage. Each team had to have a team leader and a finan-

cial controller and, to work successfully, had to use project management techniques.

In this module, marks were NOT distributed equally to all team members. Each team member divided the group mark up as s/he saw fit using peer and self assessment and these results were then averaged to reflect an individual's contribution. In addition, YELLOW and RED cards were used as a warning to unco-operative team members that their marks would be reduced or struck out altogether (see Mark Lejk's aforementioned article).

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

With large teams, project management is ESSENTIAL. At the start of the module, students were taught charting techniques and part of the assessment required evidence of the control exercised. Teams were required to monitor and review their progress regularly.

Students were encouraged to "play to their strengths" and the teams allocated roles according to individual expertise in particular areas. Teams needed strengths not only in systems analysis and programming but also negotiation, oral presentations, report writing, production of manuals, money management and many others.

HANDLING REAL MONEY

It is not normal practice to give students real money – they are often asked to simulate the spending of a fictitious amount. However, students on the ISGP needed materials such as slides, folders and expensive computer manuals. We managed to give each team £60 which they could spend as they wished as long as the tutors received proper statements and receipts. The money was obtained as a grant from the University's Enterprise in Higher Education (EHE) Unit which was more than willing to oblige as the move fitted in perfectly with the spirit of enterprise!

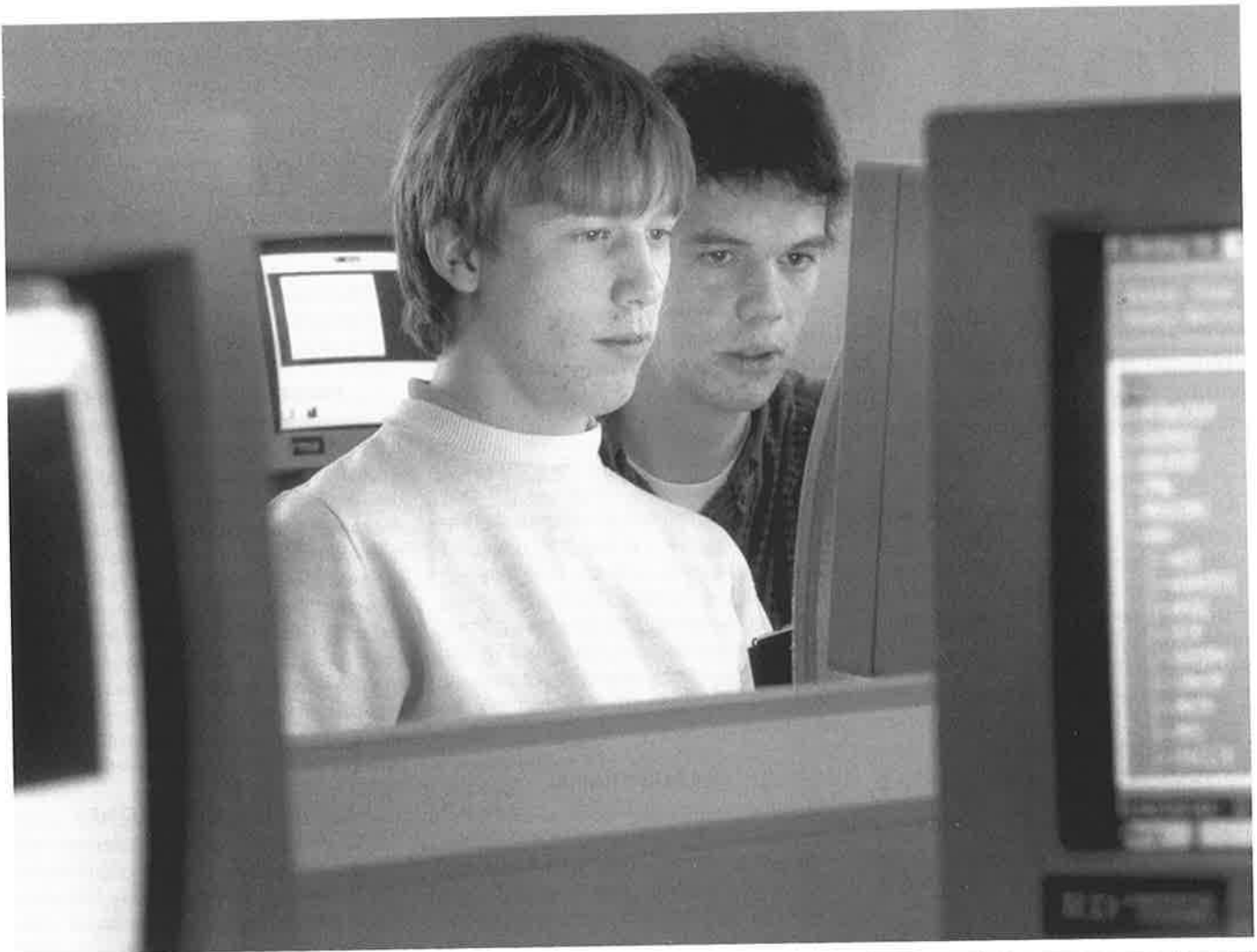
The local National Westminster Bank kindly allowed each team to set up an account and issued a cash-point card for each account.



Dave Deeks



Mark Lejk



ASSESSMENT

A quarter of the marks for the module were awarded for an individual test on project management, procurement and report writing skills. The remaining 75% was for the work produced by the group (25% for the response to tender and 50% for the final system). Of this 75%, 30% of the marks were awarded by the employer. Individual marks were obtained from these group marks using peer and self assessment methods.

EVALUATION

The module is not intended as a vehicle for introducing students to a lot of new subject knowledge. It is an integrative module where students can apply the knowledge and skills gained in more conventional modules in tackling a "real world" problem under the scrutiny of real employers.

The really interesting point to emerge, from the tutors' point of view, was that several students, who beforehand were considered of average academic ability, did extremely well in the module. We noticed a number of students who really shone as team leaders or team members but were not renowned for their high examination marks.

The employer sponsors noticed this too

and, as a result, Courtaulds Coatings offered two of our students a year's placement. Several other employers who visit the University to interview students for placements commented favourably on the module and, in some cases, our students were picked in preference to those from other Universities on the strength of this module.

Several students commented on the refreshing nature of the work and their improved attitude to team working, though a few have retained a sour taste from the frustration induced by unco-operative team members.

From a tutor's point of view, the module involves a tremendous amount of preparation, organisation and co-ordination. There has to be a real commitment from the teaching team and employer sponsors; problems frequently arise and need to be dealt with immediately. It has been a very exciting and interesting experience for all parties involved. The proof of its success is the high pass rate and the fact that the tutors and employers involved all want to repeat the exercise.

Dave Deeks and Mark Lejk are with the School of Computing and Information Systems at the University of Sunderland.

How do you remember your students' names?

With ever increasing class sizes, keeping track of who is who can be a nightmare. You need to remember who your students are, and they need to remember who you are (some seem to "forget" even that!) and of course each other.

Have you any good ideas as to how it can be done?

Contributions should be sent to the Editor (address on inside front cover) by 1 September, for publication in the Autumn issue.

But beware: remembering students may *not* always be A Good Thing. Psychologist Mark Griffiths found in an experiment that those students whose names he knew well after 2 weeks gave him a lower assessment as teacher than those whose names he had not chosen to remember!

The Lost Subject and Curricular Drift

Alan Saunders criticises the way the HE curriculum is radically affected by current economic, organisational and ideological influences.

Many will find this a provocative paper and comments are welcome.

One of more curious characteristics of recent changes in the nature of HE curricula is that certain facets of existing models are being adopted and preserved while others are abandoned. The pace and nature of change is increasing, frequently without substantive dialogue about the deep-seated implications for subject integrity, knowledge-base and broader educational and national outcomes implicit in such developments. Often, institutions have been led towards change by perceptions of market forces, cultural climate and peer cluster example rather than intrinsic considerations. This ongoing process of drift is undeniably bringing about profound changes in the structure and nature of British universities – creating new post-binary hierarchies (since the demise of polytechnics) and re-shaping the form and boundaries of subject-knowledge. I shall argue that drift is taking place largely on the basis of tacit short-term perceptions of organisational fashion and university networks of association, rather than according to a vision created by open discourse using ‘intellectual’, educational and academic criteria.

The current transition is not taking place evenly. Many Scottish universities, and notably Stirling, had apparently been viewed as pioneers in adopting American models of course structure and organisation. Nonetheless, there appears to be an invisible veil of taken-for-grantedness which surrounds the process, whereby increasing numbers of disparate combined and joint

degree matrixes are being packed into UCAS handbooks – often without much apparent thought about what passes for a third or half a subject, or which combinations best reflect learning processes. Subject fields adapt at local level without broad consensus, or an effective framework to ensure comparability between institutions over which key elements make up a fraction of a subject. In areas of “hard” knowledge, especially when bounded by professional association requirements, the subject drift is less marked. Nonetheless, the majority of applicants today will be confronted with more choice in terms of often random subject combinations. Several questions arise:

1. Where subject fields (e.g. social sciences) no longer form universal curricular boundaries, are “knowledge” and intellectual identity and rigour becoming fragmented?
2. If subjects are increasingly divided into units without an overriding ethos, how can seemingly atomised pockets of subject knowledge be contextualised or assessed holistically?
3. If individual institutions (especially the new universities) are self-regulating, how is comparability of partial subject content to be agreed or negotiated (when the HEQC appears to have side-stepped this issue)? Must the role of external examiners become increasingly emasculated and diffused?



4. Where a curriculum is simplistically unitised and credits are combined from increasingly disparate areas, where is the debate about teaching and learning – particularly in relation to issues of breadth, depth and integration?
5. Where a menu of subject combinations is offered, how much consideration is given to the relationship between subject fields? how are otherwise arbitrary elements meaningfully combined?
6. Is a new and fundamental post-binary taxonomy of university knowledge and structure emerging from a notion of peer clusters within the university sector?

THREE MODELS

It may be meaningful to attempt to establish a typology of three ideal types of curricular structure. In each case, these are not intended to describe precisely the policy of individual institutions. The models do, however, represent clearly discernible modes of practice that have characterised key polar aspects of curricular organisation and rationale in British universities.

1. The Tramway (Named) Award.

This model is associated primarily with single honours awards. It may be based on a foundation year of related subject areas (as in many of the older universities) or reflect a narrowly “defined field” and closely related cluster of subjects from the same discipline (as in many



of the new universities). For many of the redbricks, traditional courses provided academic credibility. For the former polytechnics, the CNAA process encouraged vocational and convergent curricula.

Many polytechnics seldom had the curricular steer, resource allocation, faculty structures, sense of historical precedent or authority in autonomy to embrace and integrate schools of thought allied to, but outside, narrow subject boundaries. In many cases, this resulted in a "safety in convergence" approach, with the "quality" of subject knowledge being seen as columnar rather than broadly based. Rigidity in the curriculum was made the basis for claims of "quality", with graduates being seen as specialists rather than generalists, and therefore as desirable to employers as many with "applied" awards.

2. The Supermarket Model

The late 1980s bore witness to a growth in market-oriented policy throughout the U.K. Among many of the polytechnics, this provoked moves towards an ostensibly student-centred curricular structure. The ultimate example of this often involved the crude application of notional CATS frameworks across traditional subject boundaries. "Knowledge" became weighed and calibrated and its academic integration became increasingly sidelined. The result, was a growth in the form of Combined Degree in which a student could combine a vast range of often totally unconnected subjects from various subject fields. This market-driven model was based on expanded choice and offered students new rights as academic anthropologists. Many polytechnics combined the fervour of market-orientation with community goals and targeted mature students and those with APL as beneficiaries. In extreme forms of this model, generic degree titles could be made available to cope with the vagaries of student demand and individual student fetishes. The demand-led curricular structure led to the development of units at the expense of courses. Issues of quality became increasingly unit-based and holistic curricular and educational criteria became relatively marginalised in programme design.

3. The Integrated/Modular Award

The Modular degree became increasingly popular in many of the new universities of the 1960s. The philosophy underpinning this approach could draw parallels with the medieval universities, examples from the USA, and cite classic antecedents like the Oxbridge PPE. Modular programmes could legitimate themselves by reference to: first year "tasters", concepts of the "whole person" and Renaissance qualities associated with a broadening initial year. Unlike the newer U.S import – the supermarket model – the final years of these schemes frequently tended to be largely fixed-track in nature, with relatively more substantive rather than integrative options and typically, limited integral facilities to change the final award title. Modular degree structures became increasingly popular as a perceived halfway house between defined-field and supermarket poles throughout a period of increasing diversity. The older universities generally declined to embrace and embed CATS structures fully. Instead, many adopted a varying eclecticism towards CATS (Davidson, 1993). Meanwhile, across the curriculum, concepts of tradition and faculty cultures frequently remained as bastions of opposition to wholesale change, together with relatively high application rates which enabled them to maintain traditional frameworks.

CURRENT TRENDS

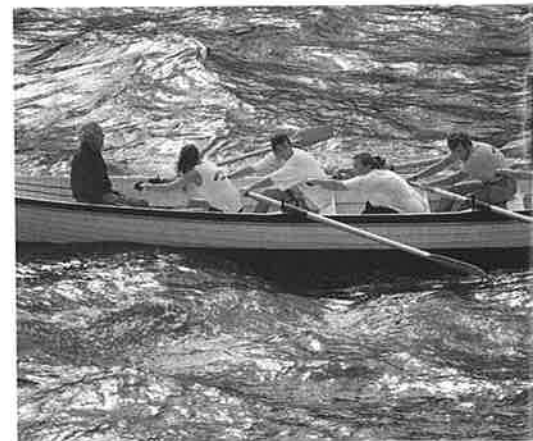
The pressure to semesterise has formed something of a backdrop to the process of curricular drift. The need to submit marks twice a year has combined with the breaking up of course units to fit into this new structure, so the restructuring of academic time has itself promoted a restructuring of categories of "knowledge". This process has encouraged credit-rating and a relatively piecemeal expansion of cumulative structures. This further exacerbated the breaking up of schools of thought into compartmentalised, measurable, transferable timetable-friendly units. The holistic framing of knowledge has become increasingly submerged beneath a patchwork of measured atomised units.

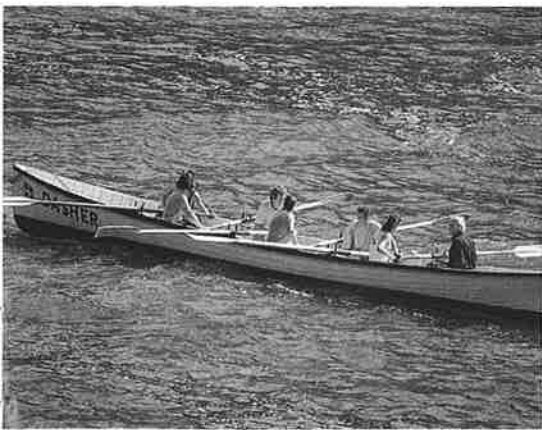
The political and economic profile of the NCVQ has encouraged some institutions (particularly former polytechnics), increasingly to define course units in terms of learning outcomes and competence statements (e.g. Liverpool John Moores) and others (like Humber-side) to redefine and orientate entire degree programmes in relation to vocationally-focused outcomes. This process has increased the emphasis on the unit becoming more portable and generic rather than a subject component or unique feature of an overall programme for learning. It is consistent with this process that the concept of "competence" may be applied to specific

tasks and outcomes associated with discrete units. If what may be measured may be deemed to exist, this may preclude discourse on learning and knowledge which falls outside such discrete and often arbitrary pockets of assessed work. Much of the recent popular debate has focused heavily on learning outcomes. While they may be extremely useful tools, stimulating long overdue debates on content and learning (so often swept under the carpet by older universities), learning outcomes are only as good as the use to which they are put. In practice, they are widely misused, defined imprecisely and often applied tokenistically.

Some agencies have established forums for discussing modularisation amongst notional 'club' members. The majority of older universities locate themselves within a status-related divisional structure. In loose descending general order: Oxbridge, London, Durham and the 'Ancient Scottish', Redbricks and 1960s universities may be forging the building blocks of specific curricular developments in relation to club clusters. Networks of association often reflect regional as well as league positions, with developments in Wales, Scotland and Northern areas becoming sub-groupings. The older universities maintained application rates from those with most A-level points. They could justify their resistance to change by reference to their essentially research-oriented position and the need to perpetuate this through the maintenance of traditional subject divisions.

Most of the new universities, now unfettered by the CNAA, are almost solitary, being relatively cut off from the relative security of the peer structure spawned by the CNAA. In the rather sudden and new found environment of being entirely self validating, even new universities which had been slow to change have anxiously looked at their peer equivalents and attempted hurriedly attempted to adapt features from the new structures to meld into their own cultural and market contexts. This curious process has been based on a sense of isolation and





putative peer association which lay simmering in the embers of the CNA and a sense that something must be done to avoid being left behind.

The HEFCE Assessors' Handbook (October 1993) only examines the curriculum in terms of espoused efficacy in relation to the "delivery" of specified "aims" and "objectives". This specification-led approach to a quality claim has more in common with British Standards than those which underpin educational 'quality' itself.

The traditional binary divide was, of course, an over-simplification of the university league system. Recently, the renewed vigour with which vocationalism has been embraced in some sectors is contributing to growing and discernible movements in curricular frameworks, design and structure which are opening up new divisions within the leagues.

A WAY FORWARD

The re-organisation of the curriculum is a harbinger of deep-seated movements which are transforming the very nature of what has passed for higher education in the U.K. The roles of the HEQC and external examiners have revealed themselves unable to cope meaningfully or effectively within a national context. Harold Silver (reporting on his research into the role of external examiners), in a talk at the University of Northumbria (March last year), observed radical inconsistencies appearing in the nature and role of external examiners and considerable disquiet amongst externals about the 'clubby' relationships and impossible burdens associated with the role. (See also Mike Hayes in *The New Academic*, Summer 1994).

British Higher Education resembles a flotilla, drifting on uncharted seas. Each vessel is commanded by a different captain, following blurred charts which are sporadically torn by sudden political gusts. Navigation often depends on captains peering over their shoulders and guessing where their peers in similar classes of ships might steer next.

In the place of a complex binary division, the pattern which is emerging is markedly less defined. The apparent options, in the form of the notional curricular models being gradually adopted, reflect 'peer-clusters' perhaps more than any other source of influence. It is these new emerging rank order clusters and the networks of association which reinforce them which are transforming definitions of subject knowledge, the basis of awards and the very nature of the British university.

Recommendations for Action:

1. A National forum for curricular discourse should be established.
2. The role of the HEQC should be broadened, deepened and radically redefined.
3. HEFC 'quality' assessments should focus on the integrity of subject/unit combinations, holistic aspects of curricular coherence and integration.



4. The role of external examiners requires a total re-examination, with responsibilities for teaching, learning, the integration of the curriculum, resourcing, moderation, review and comparability being subdivided and reinforced in terms of substantive and clearly defined sub-roles with specified powers, together with mandatory training and fair selection methods.
5. Areas of overlap between the HEQC and HEFCs should be clarified and their role as facilitators within a national debate on the very nature and future of higher education should be addressed.
6. The issue of subject-knowledge should be placed firmly on the agenda at national level.
7. The growing blurred but increasingly evident division between vocational/work-related awards and purely academic should consider the development of vocational degrees which accurately define the nature and basis of such awards.

8. Issues of learning and 'knowledge' should be considered at a holistic level and not constrained or obscured by current fetishes reflecting the pseudo-science associated with posited outcomes, the mathematics of classification and performance indicators.

9. A new national forum should be established to determine key issues underpinning the long-term future character of British university education itself.

A *de facto* re-shaping of categories and status hierarchies of 'knowledge' is taking place, yet the recent influential report by David Robertson for the HEQC (*'Choosing to Change'*), in calling for new and more flexible forms of provision, fails to meaningfully address curricular issues – marginalising debate by dismissing it as a preoccupation of the old guard. A clear and fundamental attempt to challenge both traditional and fashionable assumptions and broaden discourse to a level which transcends status hierarchies, local, historical or market-oriented considerations is now required. The establishment of fundamental and goal-oriented frameworks for consideration of long-term aims which might enable the U.K. to work towards the development of a HE system everyone may be justifiably proud to be associated with should be placed squarely on the agenda.

The pace and nature of change should surely not be mere outcomes of expedience, association or collective drift.



Alan Saunders is currently Senior Lecturer and CATS/Combined Honours Co-ordinator at The University of Northumbria.

The SEDA Teacher Accreditation Scheme

Overview

The overall aim of the *Teacher Accreditation Scheme* is to assure a common and appropriate standard of performance of teachers in HE.

The *Scheme* recognises programmes to train new teaching staff in institutions of HE. Recognised programmes have to meet strict criteria and standards. Sixteen programmes have been recognised so far, and a further eighteen are preparing for recognition. Teachers who successfully complete recognised courses are accredited by the *Scheme*.

The *Scheme* does not prescribe a particular form of programme of training for teachers in HE. Rather, it identifies the *underpinning principles and values*, and the *objectives and outcomes*, which any course or programme must show that it assesses. It acknowledges the variety of excellent current provision, and allows institutions flexibility to address their own priorities and resource issues in developing their programmes.

The process of recognition has been designed to be rigorous, clear and developmental. SEDA wishes to empower those who take part as well as to achieve a wide acceptance of the *Scheme*.

Objectives and outcomes

Accredited teachers have shown how they have, in a way which is informed by the principles and values of the scheme:

1. **Designed a teaching programme** from a course outline, document or syllabus.
2. **Used a wide and appropriate range of teaching and learning methods** effectively and efficiently, to work with large groups, small groups and one-to-one.
3. **Provided support** to students on academic and pastoral matters.
4. **Used a wide range of assessment techniques** to assess student work and to enable students to monitor their own progress.
5. **Used a range of self, peer and student monitoring and evaluation techniques.**
6. **Performed effectively** the teaching support and academic administrative tasks involved in their teaching in their department in their institution.
7. **Developed personal and professional coping strategies** within the constraints and opportunities of their institutional setting.
8. **Reflected on their own personal and professional practice and development**, assessed their future development needs, and made a plan for their continuing professional development.

Underpinning principles and values

The accredited teacher has shown how these principles and values underpin their work, and their attainment of the objectives:

1. How students learn. All teaching, academic administration and pedagogic research should be informed by an active searching out of a better understanding of how students learn.

2. Individual difference. Helping students to learn must begin with a recognition that all students have their own learning needs, and brings their own knowledge and resources to the learning process.

3. Development. Education is about the development of students' existing skills, knowledge and attitudes, and their confidence in themselves, so that they can take responsibility for their own learning. Our work with students should therefore empower and enable them to develop greater capability and competence for their personal and professional lives.

4. Scholarship. At the base of a teacher's competence is an awareness and acknowledgement of the ideas and theories of others. All teaching should be underpinned by a searching out of new knowledge and a passing on to students of a questioning and analytical approach.

5. Collaborative working. Much of our work as teachers is carried out as part of a team made up of teaching staff and academic support staff. The collegiality and support of peers is as important as individual academic excellence.

6. Equal opportunities. Everything a teacher does should be informed by Equal Opportunities legislation, policy and best practice. This requires an understanding of equal opportunities in the curriculum and in the institution.

7. Reflection. Teachers, like all other professionals, are more than competent. They also reflect on their intentions and their actions, and on the effects of their actions. They try to understand the reasons for what they see, and for the effects of their actions. They thus continue to develop their understanding and practice, and therefore inform their own learning.

Recognition Criteria

A programme will be recognised if it:

- * Requires teachers to demonstrate the achievement of each of the eight objectives and outcomes, in a way which reflects each of the seven underpinning principles and values.
- * Involves an appropriate mix of self-, peer- and tutor-assessment.
- * Is externally examined and/or moderated.
- * Has a procedure for dealing with appeals against accreditation decisions.

For further information:

Write to Jill Brookes, SEDA Administrator, Gala House, Raglan Road, Birmingham, B5 7RA.

Or see the Teacher Accreditation Scheme Home Page on the Internet! It can be found on

<http://www.lgv.ac.uk/baume/sedatas/tashome.htm>

BOOKS

HARES SET RUNNING**Assessing Learners in Higher Education***Sally Brown and Peter Knight*

Kogan Page (1994), £16.95

Assessment is under the spotlight for many reasons. There is widespread concern about "grade inflation" and Learning from Audit has been critical of the lack of control over standards in many institutions. Assessment costs have burgeoned to the point where they can exceed teaching costs and increased concern that universities promote transferable skills and work-oriented learning has questioned conventional notions of what should be assessed and how. This lively book dives straight into that maelstrom, quipping and deflating myths as it goes. It hits so many targets (purposes, reliability, fairness, feedback, documentation, changing entire assessment systems, and so on) that I felt punch drunk at the end. It is based on the kind of comprehensive, first hand experience of assessment in practice that can only come from working with lecturers in a wide variety of settings and which is so often missing from books on higher education.

This is not primarily a handbook of methods. Right from the start it is concerned with the purposes of assessment and the ways aspects of current practice so often lack clear purposes or achieve their purposes poorly or unevenly. The tension between learning through assessment and assessing what has been learnt pervades the whole book. There is a background of scepticism about attempts to be reliable at the expense of being valid but also sensible caution about the potential for unreliability of many of the student-centred methods designed primarily to support learning.

It fills a gap between scholarly but not terribly helpful reviews of the assessment literature and down-to-earth accounts of new assessment practices that have little supporting evidence or sense of wider perspective. It is a difficult gap to fill. There are useful references as follow-up sources. Supporting literature and evidence are often used to back up arguments and this is helpful. However, statements are equally often made without reference to sources – it would have been useful to have been referred to sources in order to pursue more of the many hares set running so vigorously.

*Graham Gibbs,
Oxford Brookes University.*

STICKY MOMENTS?**English People: the experience of teaching and learning English in British universities***Colin Evans*

Open University Press (1993) £11.99

I cannot remember having read an academic text with such avidity: my copy is covered in nectarine juice, tea stains and pizza cheese because I simply couldn't put it down!

This book is based on case studies of English teachers at four "old" universities and one former polytechnic. The style is scholarly but immensely readable. His anonymised respondents develop an identity of their own and I enjoyed trying to identify particular personalities from their quotations.

His chapters on teaching and learning, and on life in an institution are particularly chilling and illuminating. Not only English people will recognise with horror his descriptions of the woeful inadequacy of the minimal preparation that new lecturers get in these universities: "these courses are often like swimming lessons when you're going down for the third time". His depiction of the typical pointless and aggression-filled seminar

sounds a clarion call for the educational developer, just as his description of the Apollo teams of anti-cooperative, brilliant anarchists who run many English departments cries out for a management consultant (or a machine gun!)

The only former polytechnic, the Polytechnic of North London appears as a paradisaical island on the Northern Line where students are provided with a supportive (if scruffy) learning environment and where the staff enjoy their work and even seem to like each other. Hard comparisons are made with the University of Dreaming Spires and the civic universities in the study.

The Development of University English Teaching Project, which Evans describes as championing alternative approaches to teaching and existing in English departments is the other heroic portrayal in the book.

It's a belting book for anyone studying, teaching or managing in higher education, whatever discipline.

*Sally Brown,
University of Northumbria.*

**NEITHER AN INNOVATOR NOR AN
ICONOCLAST BE?****Practical Pointers for University Teachers***Bill Cox*

Kogan Page (1994) £13.95

This book will be most useful for teaching staff who work in universities where lecturing is the norm and innovative approaches to teaching are not. It is organised into a sequence of chapters from planning and developing a course to evaluating teaching and contains a heroic defence of the lecture, a topic to which 15 or so pages are devoted, compared to three on group teaching, two on independent learning and five on "keeping discipline".

There is a salting of conscious humour and a level, direct honesty which is endearing. However, there are statements about students which will have some readers drawing breath sharply, or – depending on their mindset – hooting with glee, or sighing sadly. Learning seems to be problematic and difficult but not half as difficult as the students, who are to be tolerated in the first instance but firmly controlled. They are, though, to be accorded a cautious respect and should be treated as individuals, not just "subsets of the crowd",

because, after all, the teacher's job is to give them "their money's worth". But, "you cannot lower standards for such people" as mature students with family commitments, although "keeping the English simple will help foreign students".

Practical Pointers combines pragmatic advice for the traditional lecturer with up-to-date, sensible references and an admirable insight into the veteran university teacher's response to "moves to greater accountability and efficiency ...overloading courses, the impact of new technology and new managerial practices". It contains efficient, schematic diagrams showing planning and organisational processes and a splendidly brave, comparative analysis of resource requirements over five years of lecture and open learning courses.

However, this is not a book for teachers who want to reflect on their part in the learning process. New methods are distasteful and "compare unfavourably with the accumulated wisdom of centuries of instruction and learning". This is not the book for the innovator or the iconoclast.

*Terri Kelly,
University of Hull.*

SHORT STRESS

Stress in Academic Life

Shirley Fisher

SRHE and Open University Press, (1994) £11.99

As Shirley Fisher highlights in her preface, the stereotype of academic life "has long been regarded as comfortable and privileged by many people". We are often perceived as leading enchanted, self-directed and monastic existences, free of all the stresses and strains of "those out there". Not a picture that would be endorsed by academics in the last decade of the twentieth century, nor even by their students.

This book attempts to look briefly at different aspects of the academic community. It starts with a generic look at definitions of "stress", stress and efficiency in our daily behaviour, the link between stress and health, and the issue of the role of control in health and well-being – this reflects about 40% of the book. After these general issues, the author begins to explore a range of topics specifically relevant to the academic community; stress in students, examination stress, stress in academic staff, overload and the division of labour, coping with stress in academics (we must be a lost cause because this chapter is only three pages long!) and, finally, managing productive activity in universities.

I thought it a shame that Dr. Fisher spent so much time on generic issues at the start of the book, many of which have been published *ad nauseam* by many others before, but the second part was wonderful. I wanted more and more from every chapter after chapter 5 but the short book format didn't allow for it. As an academic, I found real nuggets in the chapters concerned with the academic's role, the division of labour, and managing productive activities in universities – and would have liked more about how I could cope with the non-monastic aspects of contemporary academic life. It is a good read: I only wish there were more of it.

Cary Cooper,
UMIST.

STUDENT-FRIENDLY

"How's your dissertation going?"

Liz Hampson

Innovation in Higher Education (1995) £6.95

This is a delightful peep into the minds of fellow students as they try to overcome feelings of uncertainty and of being overwhelmed at the start of major project work. Alive with the comments of real students, it offers snapshots of problems, emotions and solutions, sharing many different perceptions, reactions and stories of ways to success. It shows that many of us, like children, are afraid to ask for help, believing that we really "ought to know". I appreciated the honesty of the

NO TURN UNSTONED?

The Limits of Competence

Ronald Barnett

SRHE and the Open University Press (1994)
£13.99

An excellent, stimulating and often entertaining analysis of the interplay between universities, society and knowledge.

In a vigorous and wide-ranging review of debates about transferable skills (whatever they might be), competence (whatever that is), vocationalism (but "the university is an institution for fostering unpredictable outcomes"), academic disciplines ("over-focused on thought ... silent about action"), Capability and Enterprise ("attempts to reform the higher education curriculum into a total identity formation"), Barnett shows how many scarce-tested assumptions nest in the common discourses on higher education: no turn of recent policy thinking is, it seems, left unturned by his trenchant discussion. Yet he propounds a view that accepts the value of some of these discourses if they are seen as no more than components of a more extensive account of the purposes of higher education in modern society.

His account of these purposes is demanding and subtle: demanding that students "construct their own voice" and that educators turn "a cohort of students into a learning community" while "keeping faith with their [academic] vocation, provided that they can view it with the critical detachment that a pedagogy for life calls for"; subtle because higher education should be "an education for self-transcendence", the development of wisdom.

And perhaps it stands so much against the international policy flow in higher education that this account will be swept away. Perhaps. But that is no reason not to enjoy a demanding investigation of university teaching cultures – both "traditional" and "innovative" – that have so much power to lull us into sleepteaching.

P. T. Knight,
Lancaster University.

students and the personal touches of the author, whose comments are reflective and reassuring, not intrusive.

The book is friendly of size (73 pages) and appearance and suitable for dipping into, which is just right for the frame of mind I've been in while faced with so much new material. The last chapters, covering the feelings of the successful students left me with a lovely, optimistic "job well done" feeling. I will be sharing this book with other students on my course and with tutors.

Catherine Holland,
Solihull College.

UGC RIP.

The UGC and the Management of British Universities

Michael Shattock

SRHE and Open University Press (1994) £45.00

A book by Michael Shattock, one of the few senior administrators who find the time also to make a major contribution to the study of higher education, on the University Grants Committee (UGC) is to be taken seriously.

In 154 pages the book surveys the whole history of the UGC from its quite arrival in 1919 to its demise in 1989. If it had only done that in a readable manner – which it does – the book would warrant the time of anyone interested in the recent history of UK higher education. However, it does much more. Firstly, it offers an excellent case study of the relationship between the state and one of its key institutions. Shattock's analysis of the relationship between the state and the UGC is compelling, pointing to a growing control by the state of the university system and, accordingly, a loss of autonomy for the UGC. It was a body which could not outlive the arrival of a mass higher education system.

The second strength of the book is that, while never getting out of hand, it is written from the perspective of an insider. The chapters on the birth of the University of Warwick (where Shattock is registrar) and on Cardiff (where he was asked to head an inquiry into financial affairs) offer an unrivalled insight into two case studies of particular interest. Other chapters sustain a thematic treatment dealing, for example, with research and academic standards.

The key question concerning the UGC is quite simple: was it ever the buffer institution its advocates claimed it to be? Did it provide the university system with a measure of autonomy from the state? The implicit message of Shattock's account is that the UGC never did and never could.

Ronald Barnett,
Institute of Education, London.

PHD PROSPECTS

Changing Doctoral Degrees

Keith Allan Noble

SRHE and Open University Press (1994) £40.00.

The author has achieved what most of us can only dream of: writing a PhD in a subject that is being debated nationally when the thesis comes to be written and then having it snapped up by a publisher. Changing Doctoral Degrees looks at doctoral programmes in Australia, Canada, the USA and the UK, comparing them and coming up with recommendations for change. It also looks at the origins of the PhD and its administration, as well as examining problems in the four countries and the solutions that have been tried. Some of Dr. Noble's recommendations echo the current debate in this country on the future of the PhD – for example, he supports

a master's degree before a doctorate – but others are more unusual, like dropping the oral examination.

He has avoided the danger of excessive length that can be a problem with thesis-based work. In fact, some sections are in danger of being too concise, although the author packs a lot into the seventy pages and there are an additional fifty pages of useful appendices.

The introduction claims that the book will appeal to supervisors, administrators and students. Given the cover price, the publisher is less confident. I, however, agree that the book is well worth seeking out. It gives a welcome international perspective on the present PhD debate and, with its analysis of the present situation and well-argued recommendations, it is a book that will make you think.

James Irvine,
Chair, National Postgraduate Committee.

KNOWING STUDENTS

Helping Students with Study Problems

Maira Peelo

SRHE and Open University Press (1994) 12.99

I think this is a wonderful book. It looks at the causes and manifestations of every imaginable study problem that students may have and the whole book is about helping them to overcome the problems themselves. It is packed with practical suggestions for tutors or counsellors to use when working with students. The chapters contain a wide range of exercises, giving skilful and useful briefings for tasks to do with students and staff, with full debriefing notes which illustrate the expected outcomes of the exercises.

Dr. Peelo's research informs the whole book and makes it the most authoritative and convincing discussion on helping students with study problems that I've seen. Three

beliefs pervade the book: that people bring their prior experiences to learning at university; that learning is an emotional as well as an intellectual matter; and that the social environments of the institutions in which adults study exercise a strong influence over the process of learning. The style is informal, fluent and so readable that it is very hard to put the book down.

While it will be relevant to counsellors, I think the quality of learning in higher education would be improved if every lecturer had a copy of this book – possibly its most far-reaching effect is that it helps us to know students so much better than we thought we did.

Phil Race,
University of Glamorgan.

JOURNALS IN BRIEF

Winter, R. (1993). The problem of educational levels (Part 1): Conceptualising a framework for Credit Accumulation and Transfer.

Journal of Further and Higher Education 17, Autumn.

Winter, R. (1994). The problem of educational levels (Part 2): A New Framework for Credit Accumulation in Higher Education,

Journal of Further and Higher Education 18 (1), Spring.

For all those currently grappling with the thorny issue of level in CAT Schemes, APEL or modularisation, Professor Richard Winter's article comes at a timely juncture. In Part 1 of his analysis he considers the basic two-dimensional matrix of most CAT schemes – notional learning time and educational level – and finds existing definitions of the latter flawed. Current hierarchical definitions of level in terms of cognitive processes, personal autonomy or organisational responsibility owe more, he argues, to “managerial ideology” than educational theory. What, ideally, is required, he suggests, is a “conceptual structure of successive (ie chronologically separable) hierarchically ordered levels” in which it might be possible clearly to distinguish a satisfactory process at, say level 2, in terms of intellectual functions required, from a satisfactory process at level 3. He also shows that conventional credit, based on notional learning time, is not convertible across levels, hence rendering the notion of currency highly questionable.

He identifies the need for a reconception of educational levels in which a framework of learning outcomes will be drawn from a “comprehensive theory of the learning process”. His deconstruction of the learning process forms the second part of his analysis and is drawn from a substantial empirical

study of the vocabularies of assessment used at A level, in undergraduate and in postgraduate work. What his analysis exposes, interestingly, is an underlying confusion in much of our current practice as educators between levels as grades and levels as stages. His findings reveal that there is a depressing continuity of assessment vocabulary in terms of describing general learning abilities “from A level to MA/MSc, and in all likelihood from primary school to Ph.D.”

It becomes clear through Winter's investigation of the vocabularies and categories used by teachers at these various levels that what is distinctive about higher education, as opposed to A level work, is not a series of intellectual processes such as comprehension, analysis, critical evaluation, as these are used at all stages of the learning process, but “a shift in the role of the learner”. The second part of this study offers an interesting basis for beginning to make a general differentiation of stages from the outset of undergraduate studies on to final year and postgraduate work. The assessment evidence that Winter explores indicates, in his view, an increasing emphasis in undergraduate work on the developing personal stance that a student demonstrates. Tutors, he argues, seek to encourage and reward “a capacity for autonomous learning” and the demonstration of “a personal synthesis derived from both practical experience and reading”. This is typified by students who find things out for themselves rather than working within strict guidelines controlled by teachers and who produce work that is not predictable by tutors and which is praised for essentially personal qualities that are characterised in terms such as “vivid”, “witty” and “sophisticated”.

At postgraduate level a further role for the learner is identified. This is marked by the student's commitment to a specialism and

awareness of the nature of the knowledge structures which are determining their study. They are encouraged and expected to demonstrate “theoretical and ethical grounding” and an “independent position of value”. External valuing of their work is emphasised through reference to its publishability or its value to the institution or professional community.

In offering a solution to these confusions which underlie and, in his view, undermine, current CATS frameworks, he suggests that we move away from attempts to assign credit to managerially contrived “educational levels” and to look for evidence in a sufficient number of units (not all units), at particular educational stages, of those characteristics which are associated with the changing social relationships of the learning process. In the case of undergraduate stages this is demonstrated in autonomous forms of learning based on a personal synthesis derived from practical experience and scholarly reading; at postgraduate level a commitment to specialism, mastery of scholarly or investigative technique and awareness of the value of work to a wider community. General leaning abilities will still be assessed but this must be accompanied by the use of stage-related criteria.

Perhaps the weakest point in this thesis is the reliance on an integrative unit through which the student may provide a rationale explaining how, say at postgraduate level, the credits which cannot be identified in terms of stage-related criteria may be interpreted as informing the stage-related core of their study. Nonetheless this analysis provides an original and refreshing (hello...this assessment vocabulary sounds rather familiar!) point of departure for a re-examination of these problematic issues.

Ray Land, Napier University

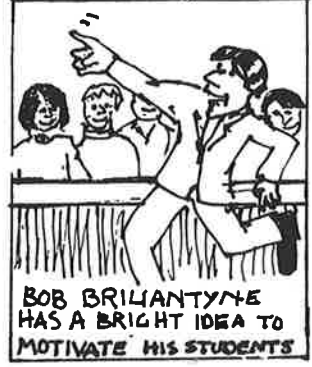
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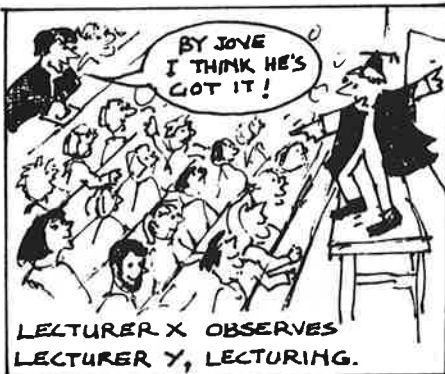
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PRO. V.C. ACADEMIC GAZES INTO HIS CRYSTAL BALL



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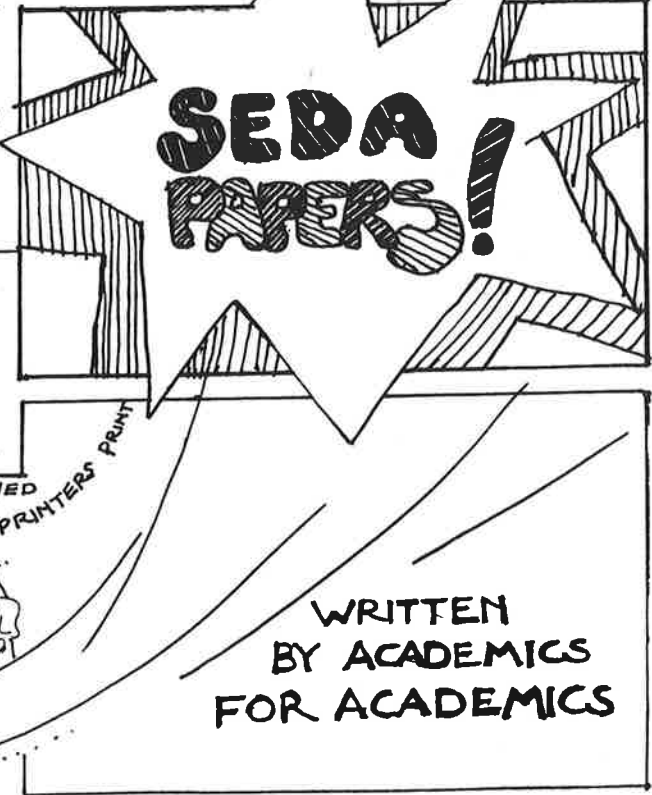


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