the New Academic

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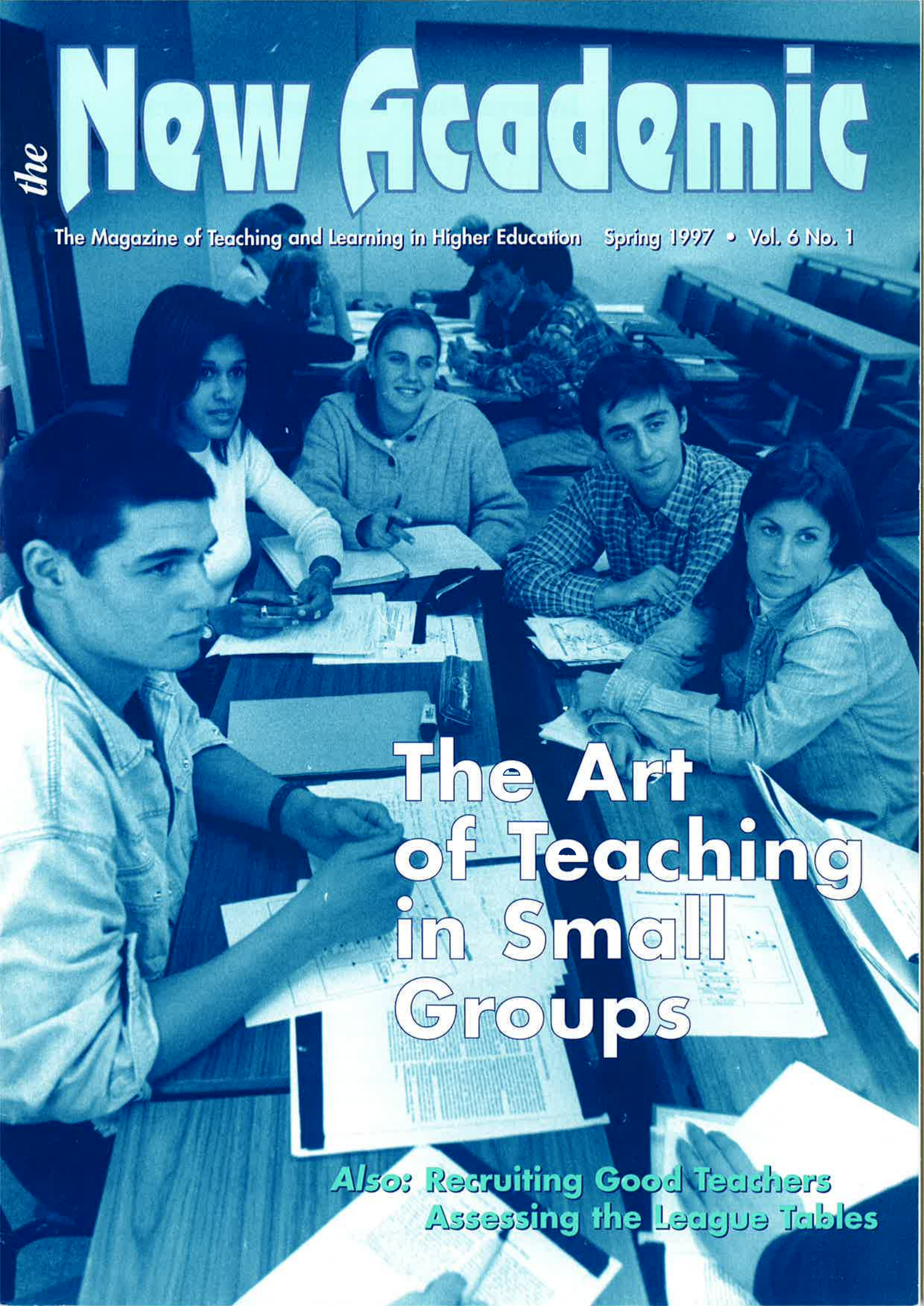

The Art of Teaching in Small Groups

Also: Recruiting Good Teachers
Assessing the League Tables

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SEDA is a professional association committed to improving all aspects of learning, teaching and training in Higher Education through staff and educational development. SEDA provides and supports activities including: national and international support groups and networks; conferences; publications - practical papers, books, a refereed journal, a magazine for teachers in HE; support and accreditation for professional development; research; liaison with other organisations.

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For details, contact Jill Brookes, Administrator, at SEDA Offices.

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 with 2 typewritten copies, on A4, double-spaced. Please send direct to Ivan Moore at Ulster University (address on p.1). Submission of an article 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 or floppy disc to be returned. To speed production, the Editor will expect to receive finalised material on floppy disc in text only, all formatting removed.

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.

Illustrations

Photographs (black/white), drawings and diagrams may be used for illustration: copies of artwork should be submitted in the first instance, but author should be prepared to provide originals (clean camera ready copy) or suitable bromides for publication. Photos of authors are welcome.

Book reviews

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

Conference reports

Reports on all conferences of relevance to teachers in higher education are welcome: 200 to 500 words, with concrete detail of interesting articles 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
- FSEDA Fellow of SEDA
- HE Higher Education
- HEFC Higher Education Funding Council
- HEFCE Higher Education Funding Council of England
- HEQC Higher Education Quality Council
- HND Higher National Diploma
- NVQ National Vocational Qualification
- SRHE Society for Research in Higher Education
- THES Times Higher Education Supplement

The list will be added to as appropriate.

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What is a small group – and why are they important?

Ivan Moore

The definition of a small group varies widely from one discipline to another and from one institution to another. It can range from two to twenty, and even higher. Institutions which for many years held one-to-one tutorials are now finding this form of teaching impossible to maintain, and see the teaching of groups of five students as a new development. Many other institutions find themselves moving from whole class sizes of twenty or thirty to over one hundred. This clearly changes the nature of the teaching and learning environment from one in which practically every class session had the potential to involve the students to one in which large lecture sessions become largely didactic and small group sessions are a rare commodity.

Additionally, many academic staff have for many years seen their role as teachers as one of knowledge transfer, with a focus on the discipline rather than one of enabling and supporting student learning with a focus on generic transferable skills – the kind of skills the employers tell us they value most.

TWO THINGS ARE CLEAR:

Students learn best, and most appropriately by engaging actively with the material and with each other and not necessarily with the lecturer.

The changing nature of Higher Education requires us to produce confident, articulate graduates with inter-personal, teamwork and leadership skills.

Providing opportunities to develop these skills does not need to be at the expense of the subject or discipline. Fortunately, it is possible to design learning opportunities which both reinforce subject-specific learning and enable the students to develop the essential transferable skills. But it does require a different approach, indeed a different conception of teaching and learning, to be developed by the teaching staff. And it does require the teacher to develop an additional range of skills. These two factors discourage staff from developing effective small group teaching strategies, to the detriment of the students learning experience – and, perhaps, career opportunity.

But those teachers who have developed effective small group strategies have found it to be a rewarding experience, both for the students and for themselves. It improves the student learning, enhances their transferable skills, provides variation, both for the student and for the teacher, and, perhaps most importantly, it is fun.

Sally Brown's article, the second in the series on small group teaching, looks at some of the issues in and approaches to small group teaching. You can see how it is possible to start with simple exercises and move on to develop more sophisticated approaches as both you and the students gain the relevant skills and confidence.

Good Teachers

Elizabeth Mapstone

This issue has fewer articles this time, but those it has are bigger and better than ever! In addition to the lead article on The Art of Teaching in Small Groups by SEDA co-chair **Sally Brown**, we have close examinations of university league tables, academic standards and the recruitment of good teachers, as well as a Forum discussion of undergraduate projects and lots of book reviews.

Good teaching is the constant theme of *The New Academic*, and a constant preoccupation of all our readers. But how do you appoint good teachers in the first place? **David Gosling** took a good hard look at this question, and came up with some practical answers.

The first thing, as he points out, is to find out what your department believes makes a good teacher anyway. He then goes through the processes by which a department can ensure it attracts people interested in the skills of teaching, and the various ways in which those short-listed for interview might be asked to demonstrate their abilities: all this before the day of interview itself, for which he has a variety of practical suggestions. If appointment panels take up his proposals, the students of the future will undoubtedly benefit.

University league tables raise hackles throughout HE, but do we even know what they mean? **J.M. Wober** and **G. Middleham** took a close look at the data behind the university league tables published in *The Times* in 1994 and 1996. Their analysis shows that these published comparisons may be misleading when the reader cannot see how the different measure relate to one another. Read this article and get ammunition for your own criticisms!

Mike Hayes returns to the fray with a suggestion that academic ills might be understood best in terms of a medical model: just as doctors may induce illness in their patients so academics may induce sickness in their own institutions. No doubt many readers will have their own ideas about the ills academia suffers and what might constitute the best medicine. Comments for **Forum** welcome.

Forum this time contains a longer than usual contribution, by **Martin Luck** who discusses the value of undergraduate research projects.

Quality sums up the contributions this issue. We hope you enjoy reading them, and find them as stimulating as we do.

The Art of Teaching in Small Groups 2

The first of this two part series on the *Art of Teaching Small Groups* looked at how best to organise and enable learning in small groups. In this second article, ***Sally Brown*** suggests ways in which we can make learning more active in seminars, tutorials and other small group contexts.

What goes wrong in small groups? Small group teaching can provide excellent opportunities for participants to get to know each other, come to grips with their subject and learn actively, and yet this kind of class is often seen by students as of less value than lectures or one-to-one sessions.

Talking to students, they often express confusion about the tasks involved and uncertainty about their role, as well as lack of confidence about participating. They criticise tutors for inconsistency of approach and treatment, for disorganisation and lack of structure, and for hogging the sessions with their own views and opinions.

COMMON WEAKNESSES IN SMALL GROUP TEACHING

- goals and structure of the seminar are unclear
- sessions lack preparation by tutor or students
- tutor often talks too much
- lack of student participation and involvement
- discussion tends to be at a low cognitive level
- questions asked by tutors rarely go beyond eliciting recall
- discussion is unfocussed for much of the time
- frequently one or two students are allowed to dominate the discussion

(Adapted from UCoSDA, 1996)

WHAT DOES BAD SMALL GROUP TEACHING LOOK LIKE?

As far as seminars are concerned, all too often these take the form of one or two ill-prepared students struggling through a pre-written paper, which is followed by desultory discussion which ends with the tutor losing patience and taking over the session as a secondary lecture opportunity.

In problem classes, students frequently work away individually and silently at problem sheets, until they get stuck, when they have to vie for the attention of the tutor with every other member of the class until they may reach the point of despair.

Tutorials are often typified by lack of focus, generalised discussion leading to chit-chat or trial by intellect, until the student is cowed into submission or revolt.

I exaggerate of course, but most readers will recognise some of these descriptions.

THINGS GO ADRIFT WHEN THE TUTOR:

- asks ambiguous or confusing questions
- asks too many questions at once, without guidance on which elements are most important
- asks a question and then answers it him or her self, using the session as a further opportunity to deliver curri-culum material
- asks irrelevant questions and wanders unproductively away from the set topic or theme
- fails to pace the session, asking a difficult question too early, so students are deterred from answering for fear of looking foolish
- adopts an inappropriate manner, asking questions in a threatening way
- fails to listen to what students say and ignores their answers
- fails to see the implications of answers and disregards them or rubbishes them
- fails to build on the answers obtained, thus losing the opportunity to channel the direction of the session productively

(Adapted from UCoSDA, 1996)

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

To engage students actively in small group sessions and avoid the pitfalls suggested in the box, tutors can use a range of techniques that help productive interaction to promote learning. This means moving towards student-centred methods where the focus is on learning, rather than being stuck in the mould of traditional small group teaching.

Available to us is a repertoire of methods that we can build into a programme of small group activity, interspersed with or replacing the traditional forms of teaching. A balanced programme of different kinds of activities can then be devised which will promote learning to the satisfaction not only of quality assessors but also the students themselves, who are likely to benefit from being stretched.

These techniques include:

SILENT REFLECTION

Start by giving the students a few minutes to think about the problem or issue to be discussed. Ask them to write down their thoughts or ideas on a note pad. Keep the task specific. For example, ask them to write down the three most important, or positive, or expensive etc. aspects of an issue. It is often useful to ask them to write on post-its and then post them on, say, a notice board or the wall. Alternatively, ask them to share their ideas with their neighbour before moving into a discussion phase. This will often encourage the quieter students and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to provide feedback.

ROUNDS

Where groups are not too large, say around twenty or fewer, go around everyone in the group and ask them to respond. People often use rounds as icebreakers or as part of the winding up of a session. Try not to make the

LEARNING AND USING NAMES

People in general tend to take more notice of people they know.

Your learners will take more notice of you if they feel that they know you – and above all – that you know them.

Getting their names right is a useful step towards building up the sort of relationship which fosters learning.

- Learn all the easy names first. If you have a group with three Peters in, make sure you know them first and which one is which! You then have a three in twenty (say) chance of getting the first name right!
- Make a conscious effort to learn three or four names a session. This way you should build up a reasonable ability to talk to people by name within three first few weeks in small group work
- If you have names that you find difficult or unusual to say, write them out clearly and check how to say them, then write it phonetically in a way you will recognise over the top. Use the name as often as you can until you've mastered it, regularly checking that you've got it right
- Think how you feel when someone gets your name wrong – especially someone you would have expected to know it. One of the problems with university teaching is that new students can feel quite anonymous and alone.
- At the beginning of the course, ask learners 'what do you want to be called?' The names they give you will be more accurate than your printed class-lists, and you'll quickly find out whether Victoria wants to be called Vicky, Jaswinder - Jazz, Cedric – Rick etc.
- At early stages it's useful to give learners sticky labels to write their names on in bold felt-tip pen. This gives you the chance to call them by the name they prefer – and gives them the chance to start getting to know each other.
- In groups with up to about 20 learners, try a round as follows: 'Tell us your name, and tell us something about your name'. This can be a good icebreaker, and can be very memorable too, helping people develop association-links with the names involved.
- An alternative round is to get the learners sitting in a circle. Ask one to say his or her name, then the person to the left to say 'I am ..... and this is .....'. Carry on round the circle, adding one name at each stage, till someone goes right round the circle correctly.
- A further alternative is to ask learners to introduce themselves, stating first their names, and then two 'likes' and two 'dislikes', so some memorable details help associate the person with the name.
- To help you to get to know their names, once you have a complete list of the names, ask people from your list at random some (easy) questions, not to catch them out, but to help you put names to faces.
- In places where small groups of learners are sitting in particular places for a while, it is useful to give the learners each a 'place card' (a folded A5 sheet of card serves well) and to write their names on both sides of the card, and place the cards in front of them. Cards can be seen at a distance much better than labels. This allows you to address individuals by name, and also helps them to get to know each other.

round too daunting by giving students guidance on what is expected of them (for example, "I want everyone to give their name and then identify one aspect of the course programme they know nothing about but are looking forward to learning about" or "Let's go round and find out what the most useful aspect of today's session has been for each person". In big rounds, students can be quite nervous, so make it clear that it's OK to pass and if people at the beginning have made your point, that concurrence is sufficient.

FIVE (OR THREE) MINUTES EACH WAY

Ask students in pairs to take it in turn alternately to speak and to listen, talking without being interrupted for a few minutes on a given topic. They might find this quite difficult at first, but it is an excellent way of getting students to articulate their ideas, and also means that the quieter students are given opportunities to speak and be heard. The art of listening without interrupting (other than with brief prompts to get the speaker back on target if they wander off the topic) is one that many students will need to foster too. This pair work can then feed into other activities.

BUZZ GROUPS

Give pairs, threes, fours or larger groups small timed tasks which involve them talking to each other, creating a hubbub of noise as they work. Their outcomes can then be shared with the whole group through feedback, on a flip chart sheet poster, on an overhead projector transparency or otherwise as appropriate.

BRAINSTORMS

This can be a valuable way of stimulating creative free-thinking and is particularly useful when looking for a solution to a problem or in generating diverse ideas. Start with a question like "How can we..?" or "What do we know about...?" and encourage the group to call out ideas as fast as you can write them up (perhaps use two scribes on separate boards if the brainstorm flows well). Make it clear that this is supposed to be an exploratory process, so set ground-rules that:

- a large quantity of ideas is desirable, so everyone should be encouraged to input at whatever level they feel comfortable
- quick snappy responses are more valuable at this stage than long, complex, drawn-out sentences
- ideas should be noted without comment, either positive or negative – no one should say "That wouldn't work because.." or "That's the best idea we've heard yet" while the brainstorm is in progress as this might make people feel foolish about their contributions
- participants should 'piggy-back' on each other's ideas if they set off a train of thought
- 'logic circuits' should be disengaged, allowing for a freewheeling approach.

The mass of ideas thus generated can then be used as a basis for selection of an action plan, a programme of development or a further problems solving task.

SYNDICATES

This is the term used to describe activities undertaken by groups of students working to a brief under their own direction. They can be asked to undertake literature searches, debate an issue, explore a piece of text, prepare an argument, design an artefact or many other tasks. To achieve productively, they will need an explicit brief, appropriate resources and clear outcomes.

Specialist accommodation is not always necessary; syndicates can work in groups spread out in a large room, or, where facilities permit, go away and use social areas of the campus or designated areas of the learning resource centre. If the task is substantial, the tutor may wish to move from group to group, or may be available on a 'help desk' at a central location. Outcomes may be in the form of assessed work from the group or produced at a plenary as described above.

SNOWBALLING (ALSO KNOWN AS PYRAMIDING)

Start by giving students an individual task of a fairly simple nature such as listing features, noting questions, or identifying problems. Then ask them to work in pairs on a slightly more complex task, such as prioritising issues or suggesting strategies.

Thirdly, ask then to come together in larger groups, fours or sixes for example and undertake a task involving, perhaps, synthesis, assimilation or evaluation. Ask them to draw up guidelines, perhaps, or produce an action plan or to asses the impact of a particular course of action. They can then feed back to the whole group if required.

FISHBOWLS

Ask for a small group of up to half a dozen or so volunteers to sit in the middle of a larger circle comprising the rest of the group. Give them a task to undertake that involves discussion, with the group around the outside acting as observers. Make the task you give the inner circle sufficiently simple in the first instance to give them the confidence to get started. This can be enhanced once students have had practice and become more confident.

This method can be useful for managing students who are dominating a group, because it gives them permission to be the centre of attention for a period of time. After a suitable interval, you can ask others from the outer circle to replace them, thus giving the less vocal ones an opportunity for undisturbed air time. Fishbowls can also be useful ways of getting representatives from buzz groups to feed back to the whole group.

Some students will find it difficult to be the focus of all eyes and ears, so it may be necessary to avoid coercing anyone to take centre stage (although gentle prompting can be valuable). A 'tag wrestling' version can also be used, with those in the outer circle who want to join in gently tapping on the shoulder of someone in the middle they want to replace and taking over their chair and chance of talking.

Alternatively it can be very effective to give the observers in the outer group a specific task to ensure active listening. For example, ask them to determine the three key issues or conclusions identified by the inner group. It is then possible to swap the groups round and ask the new inner group to evaluate the conclusions identified by the first group. Fishbowls can work well with quite large groups too.

CROSSOVERS

Often we want to mix students up in a systematic way so they work in small groups of different compositions. You can use crossovers with large groups of students, but the following example shows how this method would work with twenty seven students. Each student in a self-selected group of three is given a slip of paper with a letter and a number on, for example, the first group would have students A1, B2 and C3, the second group A2, B3 and C1 as in the configuration below:

A1B2C3	**A2B3C1**	**A3B1C2**
D4E5F6	**D5E6F4**	**D6E4F5**
G7H8I9	**G8H9I7**	**G9H7I8**

After the first task, ask the students to group themselves by letter: AAA, BBB, CCC and so on. After the second task, ask the students to work with people who have the same number as themselves: 111, 222, 333... This will allow you to get each group of nine students to crossover within groups, so they work with different people on each task in a structured way. There is no need for whole group feedback on tasks one and two, because each individual will act as rapporteur on the outcomes of their previous task in the

last configuration. As with snowballing or pyramids, you can make the task at each stage slightly more difficult and ask for a product from the final configuration if desired.

Crossovers are useful in making sure everyone in the group is active and also help to mix students outside their normal friendship, ethnic or gender groups. It takes a little forethought to get the numbers right for the cohort you are working with (for example, you can use initial configurations of four rather than three, so that in stage two they will work as fours rather than triads and if you have one person left over, you can just pair them with one other person and ask them to shadow that person wherever they go. You can use crossovers with 108 people if you use one Greek letter!

* * *

AND FINALLY ...

I conclude with a series of ideas that can be selectively used to help avoid the pitfalls and problems of small group teaching. These tips have largely been adapted from *500 Tips for Tutors* by Phil Race and Sally Brown.

TWENTY-ONE THINGSYOU CAN DO TO HELP STUDENTS LEARN IN SMALL GROUP SITUATIONS.

1 Get to know the names of the learners in your groups. They will regard the tutorial as more important if they feel that they are known to you, and that you will notice if they are not present

2 Tell them what to expect. Students new to universities may find the whole concept of a seminar or tutorial alien and frightening. Help them understand the difference in purpose between a lecture and a small group session.

3 Give them time to think.. Students often require time to get their ideas together. Don't expect an immediate response, but allow them time to write down their ideas for a few moments before expecting them to begin a discussion.

4 Brief learners in advance of the topics to be covered in forthcoming small group sessions. Give them something specific to prepare for each class, and spend some (but not all) of the time letting them share and discuss what they have prepared. Always have something up your sleeve for learners to do or discuss during tutorials, for those occasions when none of the learners brings questions or problems.

5 Give learners activities to help them integrate the material in lectures with the rest of their experiences on the course. Help them to understand how to apply theoretical material to practical contexts.

6 Delegate activities. As the course progresses, brief individuals (or small groups) to prepare for forthcoming seminars, for example to give a 15-minute review of a topic, then open it up for discussion (with you as an expert witness only when needed).

7 Agree ground-rules for seminars. These can include things such as punctuality, contribution, preparation, and record-keeping. If, for example, learners take turns preparing a short resume of what was covered in seminars, each member of the group gradually builds up a supplementary set of learning resource materials.

8 Use seminars for appropriate parts of assessed coursework. All kinds of tasks can be undertaken in small group sessions that can count towards a final assessment including assessed presentations, class tasks, work sheets and poster displays.

9 Involve them in assessing themselves and each other. The smaller groups involved in seminars can more easily participate in self-assessment and peer-assessment processes, giving learners the chance to gain a detailed perspective of the sort of assessment criteria which may be involved in later exams.

10 Use small group sessions to build flexibility into the overall course. For example, give learners choices from which to select the exact topics and formats of their forthcoming contributions. It can often help to invite an 'expert witness' from outside the course to contribute to particular seminars that learners themselves have requested – indeed the learners themselves can be given the task of finding such a person.

11 Use other students as proctors. It can be useful to bring in, for example, third-year learners to lead a series of seminars with first-year learners. The more-experienced learners can often explain things in a more-understandable way than someone like yourself who has probably 'known them for a long time'. Additionally, explaining things to less-experienced learners is one of the best ways of deepening their own understanding of the topics they're explaining.

12 Experiment with ways of trying to keep everyone involved in seminar sessions. For example, asking students to write questions (or conclusions) on pieces of paper or overhead transparencies can overcome the problem of some learners talking too much while others hardly talk at all.

13 Recognise that some learners may be quite shy. Avoid being too heavy handed in your persuasion to participate in seminars, especially near the beginning of a course when they may be feeling insecure, and when they may take even slight embarrassment too seriously.

14 Be sensitive to gender and culture issues. For some students, it is really difficult to challenge the tutor or speak out in the presence of others. Use tact to help students take an active part in whatever way they feel most comfortable, for example, by asking them to write things down sometimes rather than speak aloud.

15 Come quickly to the rescue if particular learners seem seriously uncomfortable as they contribute to a seminar. Get to know which ones are 'robust' enough to weather any difficulties, and which ones will appreciate your helpful intervention.

16 Get learners talking to each other using non-threatening icebreakers. Build up your own stock of short icebreakers, so that you can regularly start off a seminar session in an informal 'fun' way.

17 Discuss with learners the value they can derive from seminars, and particularly help them to see that the more they contribute to seminars, the more they will learn themselves.

18 Ensure that learners don't undervalue seminars. Don't let them fall into the trap of thinking that because seminars are less-formal than lectures, they are less important. In lectures, explain now and then that 'the important issues here will form the basis of your seminars in the next week or two'.

19 Allow learners to participate in different ways. Vary the activities so that students can make their contributions in a discussion, in presentations, as an individual or as a member of a group.

20 Use seminars as an opportunity to present alternative views. Having used the lecture as an opportunity to describe one particular approach to the topic, use the seminar to help students perceive different perspectives on an issue.

21 Have contingency plans. Where seminars are spread over a week, students who have sessions on Mondays, for example, may have problems in the UK in the summer when there are a number of Bank holidays. Build some flexibility into the system so that the same students don't always suffer if a class is lost.

References and Useful Reading

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Assessing the Assessment of Universities' Quality

J.M. Wober and _G.Middleham_ examined the data behind the university league tables published in _The Times_ in 1994 and 1996. Here they explain what they did to the statistics, and why, and show that league tables may be misleading when the reader cannot see how different measures are related to each other. An important topic for all our readers!

Around one third of Britain's school leavers now go to university, where they join increasing numbers of students from overseas. Tertiary education is clearly one of the most important investments a young person ever makes. Choice of university is therefore a vital interest for applicants and for universities and both need to know more about the criteria that will best match the two parties. Many of the new recruits will be from families in which university education is a new experience, so they may not be influenced by their parents' own choices. Apart from their schools' advice, what else do they take into account? Other elements they may consider could include the reputation of the particular courses, whether they know others who have been or who are at a university, its proximity to home, and the availability of cultural and sporting activities that should make student life more attractive. At least some might want to take into account what arrangements a university has for counselling and pastoral support, and the drop-out rates within and averaged across courses, and how easy it is to transfer if an initial mistaken choice has been made. There may well be other elements that students consider important, and a good published guide for applicants would deal with most of such factors.

For some years *The Times* has produced a "league table" of Britain's universities. The paper realises that its measurements are controversial. In 1994 it recognised that "the new universities remain the most unhappy with the overall ranking system" which undervalued their attempts to provide access to students who might be considered underqualified in more traditional institutions. *The Times* therefore introduced a "value added" indicator and measures of professional as well as academic qualifications, acknowledging that the first of these was still "a subject of continuing debate . . . (which) . . . will be refined further in future years". The 1994 text also said "the rankings were designed primarily to guide students . . . able to consider universities throughout Britain".

One ostensible purpose of these tables would be to provide a guide to students (both in Britain and overseas) applying for a place. Another purpose might be to help universities in their drive to attract students, or research funds; those high in the overall list, or who could demonstrate a recent improvement in ranking might then be more able to attract investment. A third purpose that is not to be ignored is to be a part of a consumerist culture, in which all kinds of personal services and commodities are publicly assessed and evaluated. One function of the published lists could be to spur universities to try to improve their position; but another might be to set stereotypes so that better qualified students, researchers and larger funds flow towards higher rated institutions, making it more difficult for those lower down to compete on similar terms. Their only option might then be to try to do things that universities higher in the lists were not doing (whatever that might be).

In 1994 *The Times* explained its Value Added index as: "(it) relates the entry standards of students to their achievements on graduation", and said that a good score on this new indicator would enhance a university's overall position, whatever its scores on other attributes. Readers were invited to contribute ideas on refining the measure, which provides one of the reasons for this study. The assessors Tom Cannon and Karen Smith acknowledged in 1996 that

> "the hardest indicator to construct is the estimate for value added. This is calculated by taking the entry standards reached in the normal year of entry and using these to project likely outcomes for completion, firsts and employment. These projections are then measured against the actual outcomes using a series of iterations."

Such procedures are probably too technically abstruse to expound in a daily newspaper, but for the student for whom the result is intended as a consumer guide it could be translated something like this:

> "You have two Cs and a D and people like you, at University X, (which has a low value added score and/or a low overall score) tended to finish with a third class degree and a poor employment record; however people like you at University Y (which has a high VA score and/or a high overall score) tended to finish with a second class degree and a reasonable employment record."

If this is how candidates interpret what they are being told (for which we have no direct evidence) then one might expect candidates with lower A level scores to look for universities, disregarding their overall ranking, which nevertheless have a good VA score.

Candidates might also pay more attention to VA than to teaching assessment, which after all is only one of the possible means to achieving the outcome they have already seen measured; and they might neglect other 'input' indices such as entry grades and staff student ratios, as well as the "overseas students" index (which *The Times* suggested in 1996 was a "measurement of international reputation"). This may be true for some 'ivy league' institutions; but it remains to be shown that students who are now sought in marketing drives in many countries will take a university's score on an "overseas students" index (even if this is brought to their attention) as a serious reason either for applying to that institution or for avoiding it. Rather they probably respond to initiatives from, contacts with and experience of particular departments.

Aside from applicants for places, universities themselves attend to *The Times'* listings. They may be able to decide to invest in certain directions if they think that this might improve their total points score. For example, a million pounds spent on library books might bring in more total points than the same sum spent on student accommodation. A university might even calculate what would happen if it reduced its student population, if by doing this it could be more selective on entry grades, and if that was found to be a more powerful way to increase the overall score in the table – ultimately to

attract funds or to expand student numbers later.

The indicators from which the final scores are currently produced contain some genuine measures of what the university provides, such as library spending, on which there is scope for strategic decision making; secondly, there are indices of mixed provenance such as the proportion of 'firsts', which partly measure what students bring to a university as well as what they – and their colleagues may get from it. Thirdly, some of the measures used to yield an overall index of performance are themselves already output indicators, such as value added and employment performance. If a university, or a student applicant wishes to use the published tables intelligently, then there has to be some detailed study of how the ingredients and figures work.

A probable outcome of the publication of rankings is that positions which prompted interest two and three years ago have now evoked much less attention. This may be because the broad picture has not changed much (there is a correlation coefficient of 0.95 between the total scores in 1994 and those in 1996) and that stereotypes are hardening. If this is true it is important that questions be raised about what these scores "really" reveal.

For example, do all indicators weigh similarly in the eventual outcome? A simple examination of the results suggests, indeed, that value added is inversely related to the overall score. What do exact calculations show? These and several other matters are what this study now explores.

METHOD OF STUDY

Two sets of tables have been examined, published by *The Times* in 1994 and 1996. The first step in each case has been to correlate the scores on all of the indicators, taken in pairs. This shows initially to what extent each of the indicators runs parallel with each of the others. Next, to display in what ways the indicators resemble each other in groups, a "factor analysis" has been run for each year's set of indicators (excluding the total scores). Within each group, the indicators tend to correlate highly with each other; and across groups there tend to be only small correlations.

Once we know how elements group together in factors, scores can be banded together for all the measures in one factor, and we can then calculate how such 'factor scores' relate with an end-criterion, in this case the published overall rating for each institution. Finally, we have made what is called a multiple regression calculation that shows the extent of impact that the scores from a group of items in a factor, and from other individual measures, each have independently upon the overall total score. This phenomenon of independent impact is important and does not easily meet the untrained eye; a set of intended predictor measures may be interrelated with each other in a mutual criss-cross; the problem is then to disentangle which 'strings' in this 'cats cradle' do independently exert a pull on the 'target' (that could be a finger in the cats cradle analogy, or an overall rating score as in *The Times'* assessment system). For simplicity here, not all the detailed results of these calculations will be shown, though they are available on enquiry for any interested reader.

RESULTS

In 1994 *The Times* used fourteen measures in compiling scores to produce a university's place in the overall assessment. We have correlated each measure with each of the others, (the 'cat's cradle' which is not shown in full, here) and with the overall score. The first Table shows the correlation for each ingredient measure first with the total rating in 1994 and then with the total in 1996.

TABLE 1: CORRELATIONS INVOLVING MEASURES PUBLISHED IN 1994

Product moment correlation coefficients (where r= or >24,p<.01; where r=or >32, p<.001), relating:

	TOTAL 1994	TOTAL 1996
Research	.91	.93
Entry Grade	.89	.86
Res. & Develop't Income	.87	.84
Firsts	.82	.79
PhDs	.79	.71
Staff Student Ratio	.73	.68
Post Graduates	.71	.70
Library Spending	.70	.75
Student Accommodation	.68	.70
Professional Qualifications	-.59	-.70
Completion Rates	.42	.34
Overseas Students	.25	.30
Value Added	-.33	-.46
Employment	.04	-.09
TOTAL,1994	100	.95

The ***correlation coefficient*** is a measure of similarity between two phenomena. The maximum value is 1.00 and the minimum is -1.00. A figure of 91 means that the universities' scores on 'research' in 1994 are very much in the same rank order as the universities' results on the total index that year. The first five measures are particularly strongly related, both amongst themselves and with the Total index, since they correlate with it at around 0.8 or greater. There may be no need to pay much attention to any or all the other measures if one knows the research record of a university, to make a very good guess at its overall rating on this particular "recipe". Four measures follow the first five, for which the relationship of each with the Total has a correlation of around 0.7; these measures have the flavour of being more concerned with the student's life and amenities.

It is of particular interest that "professional qualifications" correlated negatively with the overall measure, which seems curious in terms of a list of scores all of which might be thought to be additive and are intended to inform the potential "consumer".

The student perusing these scores might well have been confused; thus if s/he felt that professional qualifications (of staff?) were important, s/he might then have had to opt for a university with a somewhat lower total overall score.

The Value Added measure was also negatively correlated with most of the other measures, and with the overall total index.

Recent graduates' employment record is a measure that did not correlate significantly either with any of the other predictors (details not shown in Table 1), or with the total – which raises a question which should be clearly answered in future years, of exactly how the compilers had woven this into their aggregate.

One way of doing this would be by some scheme of weighting so that each and every index had some significant and positive bearing on the overall result; *The Times* reports that this particular measure had a weighting of +100 (as large as that given to any other measure) towards compiling the overall index.

Finally, the proportion of overseas students at a university would also appear to be correlated only weakly with the overall score; why this too might continue to be any part of the predictive array for a year is therefore not clear, nor is it easy to see how a prospective user might weigh such information.

The first correlation results seem to point to at least two "families" of measures; but this is not the most thorough way of detecting the "real" underlying clustering.

A further analysis (product moment factor analysis) has therefore been carried out to see how many factors may emerge amongst all the criteria used in 1994 and the results are shown in the next Table.

The first factor includes ten of the measures that had the most marked correlations with the total score, in the simple correlation table. As one might suspect from the simple correlation table, and from the discussions surrounding the 1994 results, value added is an indicator that functions separately from the main list of measures. It is associated in a second factor with the measure of graduate employment. Value added also has a loading in the first factor that is not far short

TABLE 2: FACTOR ANALYSIS OF MEASURES IN THE 1994 ASSESSMENT

Loadings on Factors;			
Measure	1	2	3
Entry grade	90	-15	10
Staff/student ratio	75	16	03
Research & Development	85	-15	06
PhDs	81	-05	-15
Prof. Qualifications	-64	32	-30
Library spending	70	-01	30
Student accommodation	72	-16	-01
Firsts	81	-04	04
Research	89	-27	06
Postgraduates	70	-30	19
Value Added	-42	51	-07
Employment	07	91	08
Completion rates	44	-05	-48
International students	22	-00	86
% of variance accounted for	49	9	9

of that in the second, albeit in a negative direction, so the distinctness of the second factor is not exclusive, and it might be argued that value added and graduate employment should be treated as independent measures for the purposes of a subsequent regression calculation.

The final 'factor' also lacks clarity and is difficult to name but the high salience of international students combined with a negative loading on completion rates suggests an element of "open-endedness" which may be found in some institutions much more than in others. Of particular importance is that such a feature functions differently from the "traditional qualities", and from the vocational or value added benefits identified in the first two factors.

However, it could be argued with the third factor as with the second that, because the measure of completion rates has an almost equal weighting on the first factor as it has on the third, this index could also be dealt with, as could the one in international students, as an independent measure in a regression analysis.

We will now show the third table, and expound it for readers not familiar with such statistics.

This analysis shows that Factor 1 has the lion's share of predictive power. However, the other measures each have significant predictive power as well. Graduate employment has a significant bearing on the total score – not suspected from the simple correlation, but in a negative direction. Completion rates, with a significant positive simple correlation with the total score now emerges as significantly negatively loaded in the regression equation. What might these two results mean? It is conventional to explain them by saying that measures like this present their simple (in these cases positive) correlations partly as a result of being related to other measures, which have robust links with the overall score; but when the "effect" of these mutual interrelationships is mathematically removed, the underlying connection between such a measure and a criterion is found to be negative.

International student presence and value added were positive predictors of total score in this analysis – countering the impression from the simple correlations that the final relationship was negative. An interpretation of this could be that the simple negative correlation with the total arose from the many negative correlations this index had with the other predictors, and this was in some way countered by a weighting calculation; however, it is difficult to support this with the only evidence given in *The Times'* table, which indicates that the measure was weighted 100 in creating a total.

It seems therefore that the total score – published in *The Times* and picked up by many other newspapers as a single indicator with which to identify the merits of universities, was not clearly and unidirectionally reflecting these other and possibly important attributes of the whole community of universities.

DISCUSSION

One might expect that a subsequent ratings exercise would cope effectively with these concerns about the exercise in 1994. It might be necessary to publish not just one, but two, or three subtotal scores, and to highlight two, or three ranking orders according to each of these subtotal procedures. Thought might be given to refining value added measures or to coping in some adaptive way with the "open endedness" attribute; at any rate, it might not be convincing simply to exclude some measures which are either difficult to establish, or redundant because they tell us little over and above their close correlates. Whatever the considerations taken into account by the assessment team, the 1996 results were based on ten indicators. Research and development income, measures of PhDs, Postgraduates, professional qualifications and completion rates were dropped from the analysis; a measure of teaching assessment was now included.

Three main points present emerge from the statistical analyses. First, there is one main group of indicators that characterise the picture of quality that *The Times'* total score creates. One of these measures, however, that of entry grades is likely to be not just an independent ingredient of total status but in substantial part a product of it. Universities with a traditionally good reputation obviously find it easier to attract more highly qualified students – and staff; the combination of these delivers more firsts and attracts more research (and development) funding.

The second matter is the conspicuous otherness of the value added criterion. Candidates both in 1994 and 1996 may have noticed and have been puzzled by the inverse simple correlation between VA and overall score. Few will have realised the positive underlying connection that only emerged from the multiple regression analysis. Are there other indicators which could be defined, which would be of interest to students and to the universities which provide a service, and which could be woven into an effective part of an overall quality score?

One feature of the new universities is that they try to focus on certain departments as centres of excellence; some of these deal with subjects which the older universities only come round later to assimilating. This suggests two further measures that could be refined for an assessment; one would be the presence of departments – providing that they work in an academically thorough way – that are not available in many places elsewhere; the other would try to express the quality within faculties or departments. Some such measures are in use in American university assessments.

Aside from new indicators, since the main "client" cited in *The Times* articles is the student, it is surely necessary to have a

TABLE 3: MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF INDICATORS OF THE 1994 TOTAL "MERIT" SCORES

Dependent measure:			Total Score
Multiple R			.996
Adjusted R square			.992
F			2305.1
Significance of F			<.0005
Independent measures	**Beta**	**T**	**Significance of T**
Factor 1	1.04	86.60	<.0005
International students	.04	4.40	<.0005
Value added	.08	7.47	<.0005
Employment	-.07	-7.60	<.0005
Completion rates	.04-	3.83	<.005

substantial survey of intended applicants which asks them how important they find each of many facets of a university. Some of these attributes may be prominent in their minds but may be outside the power of a university to alter – such as "near to where I live"; others may be known to contribute to the quality of students' lives (such as good pastoral care, provision of personal tutors, chaplains, help lines and similar structures), but which may not achieve high desirability scores in a survey. Nevertheless, if students consider that good lodgings or the numbers of clubs are important features of a good university then such indicators should effectively be built in to an overall score.

Other indicators which a student might not consider important, but which might demonstrably be (as suggested here) connected with positive outcomes, such as staff-student ratios, must clearly continue to be a part of overall assessment, even if they do not emerge as highly favoured in some survey of students' perceptions of importance.

Finally, though *The Times'* published scores may help us understand what provides a good university and may stimulate the provision of favourable conditions, the publication of total scores may negatively stereotype and solidify some public perceptions so that genuine improvements may go unnoticed.

The argument for this last possibility is this: it is conceivable that an ideal university system could contain many institutions all of equally good (or poor) quality. A scoring system should then reflect this and should not by 'artificial' means manage to designate one as best and another as worst by separative ranking. This is not how, for example, local government or water supply services are judged. Most people would probably want water companies to be rated on several indicators and all of the utilities to achieve a high score on all measures and thus to have almost inseparable positions on some combined quality scale.

Where an established system reinforces a zero-sum game perception, this simultaneously obscures the perfectly real and even desirable possibility of a non-zero-sum game structure. Indeed, this may be how university experience does in the end work out; for if new graduates are surveyed and asked how they evaluated the institutions in which they had just lived and studied one might reasonably predict that satisfaction scores would be a great deal closer than the large range found in *The Times'* tablets of stone.

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Recruiting Good Teachers

Virtually all academic departments claim that teaching ability is an important consideration when making appointments, yet there is considerable evidence that most appointment panels have no systematic or reliable way of judging how good a teacher the person they are appointing is likely to be. Are there ways of testing candidates' teaching ability? Can appointment panels make their judgements more reliable? *David Gosling* explores some ideas about how departments could improve the way they go about recruiting good teachers.

When new academic staff are being recruited, panels normally look for a range of qualities in the person they appoint - qualifications, experience and expertise in a specialist area of academic work, communication skills, understanding of students' learning needs, up-to-date knowledge of information technology, publications at an appropriate level, research record, and the ability to work with others to achieve the goals of the department or subject area. The nature of the post and the subject area making the appointment will mean that the list of qualities being sought will vary, but in recent times research out-put and research potential has often been the deciding factor in the appointment decision. This simplifies the process since the criteria used to judge research output are reasonably well-known, understood and agreed, although the status of particular journals or the value of a conference paper may be debatable.

Almost everybody appointed to an academic post in Higher Education will be required to undertake teaching at diploma, undergraduate or postgraduate levels. Not surprisingly all departments say they want to appoint good teachers but, according to a recent survey carried out by Graham Gibbs, relatively few appointment panels pay significant attention to candidates' teaching record. Yet the appointment of someone, no matter how good their research record, who is a 'disaster' or who is merely 'mediocre' in teaching has far-reaching consequences for students, the department and for other teaching colleagues. Student progression rates can fall, complaints can become a real problem, other staff find they have to take on additional work to cover for the weak member of the team, the overall rating of the unit or course and its popularity with students can plummet, the reputation of the department can be damaged and the possibility of a good rating in the HEFCE teaching quality assessment can disappear. On the other hand a staff member committed to teaching (at whatever level they are appointed to teach) can boost the morale of both students and other staff, they can contribute to new course developments and introduce new approaches to the teaching of the subject.

Yet despite the obvious importance of appointing someone who has good teaching skills, or, if they are new to HE, who has a strong commitment to acquiring those skills, it is often difficult to judge just how effective a teacher someone is likely to be. In some cases, appointment panels appear to pay little attention to acquiring any evidence which will aid them in making such a judgement. What more could they do? Are there ways of making judgements about who will make a good teacher more reliable?

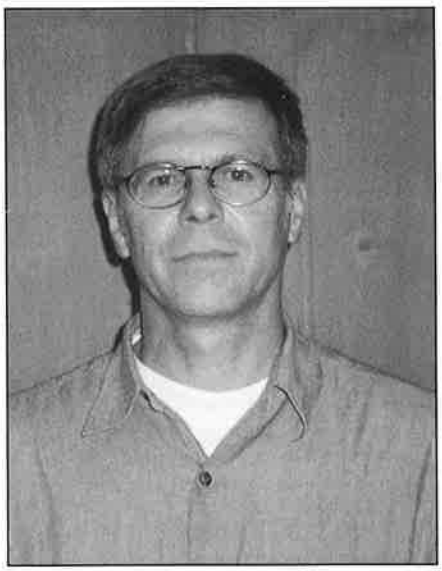
STEP ONE: Be Clear About the Qualities that Make a Good Teacher

If we are to select staff on the basis of their teaching quality we must have a clear idea about what constitutes a good teacher in Higher Education. Everybody will have their own idea about the qualities of a good teacher but most will include features such as expert subject knowledge, ability to plan structured and challenging learning activities, ability to communicate well with students to motivate them and inspire them to have an interest in the subject, ability to show enthusiasm for the subject, be responsive and sympathetic to student needs, use fair assessment methods that encourage learning, be reflective and self-critical about their own teaching and be well-organised and committed to their job. (see Box 1 What makes a good teacher? for one example of a list of characteristics we might be looking for).

It might be that the department is looking for rather more specific characteristics, such as knowledge of computer-based learning techniques or the ability to design open learning materials. If this is the case it is important to keep this in mind throughout the process.

STEP TWO: Designing the Advertisement

I found that when I did a quick survey in the Times 'Higher' that most job advertisement for HE posts merely state that the appointed person is 'expected to teach' within a given subject area and that 'relevant teaching experience is required. Advertisements are not normally the place to go into details about your requirements. However you can indicate that teaching is given a higher importance from the outset by specifying (a) that the department has, as part of its mission, a commitment to provide higher quality teaching, and (b) that suitably qualified applicants are expected to demonstrate a strong record of good undergraduate teaching, or a firm commitment to acquiring teaching skills



David Gosling

(if this is an appointment of someone new to teaching in HE).

It could also state in the advertisement that applicants will be expected to provide evidence of their commitment to teaching quality - or, if you wish, a commitment to innovation in teaching.

STEP THREE: Job Description and Person Specification

The job description can also state that the appointed person will be expected to provide good quality teaching as an essential part of their duties. This is not an unreasonable requirement given the pattern of work of most lecturers.

Further details can be given of the kind of teaching to which the person will be expected to contribute – for example:

- to work with a team of staff on a problem-based approach to contribute to the development of high quality teaching materials
- to develop the department is commitment to computer-based learning
- to assist in the development and assessment of students' transferable skills
- to contribute to the improvement of laboratory/studio/workshop teaching
- to work with a team of staff writing open learning materials

In the person description it can be made very clear that the department is to look for someone with (for example) :

- good communication skills with students
- a strong commitment to equal opportunities in student learning
- a concern for student welfare
- a commitment to support students' with special needs
- a commitment to work positively within a multi-cultural environment

Clearly each department will need to write its own person specification which can differ from these examples, so long as the department's values are made explicit, by clearly stating what it expects in the person it will appoint.

STEP FOUR: Application procedure

Having stated the kind of person being looked for the next question to be addressed is: What kind of documentation will be required to enable the appointment panel to decide on the short list of applicants?

The normal application form provides basic information on applicants' teaching experience, but will not provide any evidence on either the person's values or the quality of their work.

It is not appropriate at this stage to ask applicants' to provide considerable volumes of evidence - that would be unmanageable - but it is possible to ask applicants' to state, in a letter accompanying their application:

- a summary of the teaching methods used by the applicant
- what evidence the applicant could provide at interview of the quality of his/her teaching, if he/she were to be short-listed
- what innovations in teaching/curriculum design he/she has initiated
- the aspects of his/her teaching of which the applicant is particularly proud

Suggestions or examples of indicators of good teaching could be provided to give some guidance to applicants on the kinds of evidence that was being looked-for.

STEP FIVE: Short-listing and Invitation to Interview

When short-listing you will need to interpret the evidence provided on the application

Box 1

QUALITIES OF A GOOD TEACHER

1. Expertise in the field of study
- demonstrates a secure knowledge of the general subject area, and up-to-date knowledge of the recent literature in the subject specialism being taught, and a thorough grasp of the skills and techniques demanded of experts in the field
- uses scholarship to devise hand-outs, reading lists, and learning activities which are up-to-date and appropriately challenging to the level of the students
- is able to respond adequately to student questions and provide sound academic guidance in the subject area

2. Planning and Organising
- plans teaching and learning activities thoroughly within a complete programme of study
- prepares teaching and learning activities thoroughly
- makes good use of contact time with students
- plans teaching to meet published objective
- designs appropriate and helpful learning materials
- carries out essential organisational tasks, keeps good records to monitor student progress

3. Facilitating Learning
- is able to communicate subject knowledge clearly in a variety of learning situations (e.g. lecture, seminar, student, laboratory, etc.)
- encourages and elicits questions and student responsiveness
- is able to structure learning activities to help students learn effectively and independently
- produces learning materials using appropriate media/learning technology
- uses diagnostic assessments to identify student difficulties and responds appropriately

4. Relationships with students
- displays enthusiasm for the subject and elicits hard work and enthusiasm from students
- recognises student diversity and is able to work effectively and fairly with students from all backgrounds
- demonstrates commitment to students' welfare and takes special steps to deal with students with special needs
- is available at regular publicised times for student consultations and tutorials, including resit candidates
- shows a sense of humour when needed

5. Assessment of students
- uses assessments which match objectives and which encourage learning
- uses assessments which are fair, valid and reliable
- marks assessed work fairly and impartially
- provides helpful and prompt feedback on assessed work

6. Course Evaluation
- carries out self-reflection on his/her teaching
- provides opportunities for students to provide feedback
- is responsive to student feedback
- is willing to engage in peer evaluation

7. Professional Commitment
- is able to work effectively with other staff to plan and deliver course
- attends staff meetings regularly and participates constructively
- engages in staff development relevant to teaching, learning and assessment
- is adaptable to changing circumstances and is willing to innovate and experiment
- makes effective use of self-managed time to prepare and update course delivery and materials

form, and in the accompanying letter. You will be looking not only for clear statements about the teaching methods used by the applicant, including where possible evidence of some of innovation in teaching, but also a willingness to provide appropriate evidence to support his/her claims. If you wish, you can telephone applicants to elicit further information, but, if this is done, the same statement about the department must be made and the same questions must be asked of all applicants to ensure fairness.

Once the short-list has been drawn-up you will need to decide what further documentation can be asked of those invited for interview. There are a number of possibilities which require varying degrees of commitment by applicants:

- full teaching portfolio
- teaching materials devised by the applicant
- video of teaching situation
- details of teaching experience
- evidence from evaluations of courses or units taught by the applicant
- outline of current teaching with commentary on methods and modes of assessment used
- task set, e.g. how would you teach a first year unit on . . . ?
- invitation to provide a critique of the methods of teaching and the curriculum design of an existing course or unit

STEP SIX: On the Interview Day

The interview day is the crucial event for both you and the applicants. In a relatively short space of time you need to assess the qualities of the people you have invited and how they will fit into your department. You will no doubt be wanting to explore with

Box 2

COLLECTING EVIDENCE ON TEACHING SKILLS AT THE INTERVIEW

1. PRESENTATION

Each candidate may be asked to make a short presentation to the interviewing panel and/or to a wider audience. Normally these should be short, say 8 minutes, and the pre-specified topic should relate to some aspect of the post. Candidates are often asked to describe their research, but they could be asked to talk about a topic related to their teaching or about how their research and teaching are related.

Comment

The most commonly used technique which gives the panel the opportunity to judge a person's presentation skills, clarity of speech, (sometimes) the use of visual aids and their ability to engage an audience.

Problem: difficult to judge from a presentation how a person will perform in a lecture hall or seminar room or dealing with students one-to-one.

Suggestion

The topic for the presentation can be more directly related to the teaching responsibilities which the successful candidate will need to fulfil.

For example, candidates can be specifically asked how they might:

- approach some aspect of the teaching they will be required to deliver.
- teach an aspect of the course
- cope with teaching a part of the syllabus which students are known to find difficult.

Applicants need to be clearly briefed on the audience they are addressing.

2. TRIAL SEMINAR

The applicants may be asked to lead a seminar on a topic which they will be teaching. The participants of the seminar can be:

- the staff of the department
- students
- staff and students

Comments

Trial seminars are essentially a form of role play which allow the panel to observe teaching skills, although role plays are difficult to make entirely convincing. However, this can be a good opportunity to assess the communication skills of applicants.

Suggestions

These are some suggestions for topics, which focus specifically on the applicant's approach to teaching, on which applicants may be asked to lead a seminar:

- How my research will inform my teaching
- My teaching philosophy
- How I would teach this course
- How I could contribute to the teaching of this department
- How can the curriculum be adapted for a multi-cultural student group?
- How do race or gender issues influence teaching and learning strategies?

3. IN-TRAY EXERCISE

The idea here is to present the applicants with a task or situation to which they are asked to respond or to explain how they would respond. Some suggestions for in-tray exercises are as follows:

marking and commenting on an essay

- produce a handout on . . .
- draft a course outline on . . .
- draft a lecture outline on . . .
- devise a course evaluation questionnaire . . .
- how would you respond to the following situation . . . followed by a typical problem faced by lecturers

Comments

Useful method for assessing the likely way in which applicants will respond to situations in teaching and learning and assessment. The task may be set in advance or announced on the day. Important that all the applicants should have an equal chance to be able to complete the task. For example, be careful not to disadvantage applicants who may be unfamiliar with this type of institution, or the British system of HE, or who cannot complete the task without prior notice because of some disability.

4. TEACHING PORTFOLIO

Applicants can be asked to bring to the interview a portfolio of evidence relating to the current teaching and be asked to talk to the panel about the portfolio. Applicants will need to have precise instructions about what to include in their portfolio including guidance on length, indexing, types of evidence, and criteria against which the portfolio will be judged. For example, if you are interested in equal opportunities issues, indicate to candidates that evidence should be included on this topic. Or if you want student evaluations included in the portfolio, say so.

Not all staff will be familiar with the idea of teaching portfolios and so it is important not to fall into the trap of judging candidates on their ability to put a portfolio together rather than their teaching skills. Whilst portfolios can reveal a good deal about how good a person is on paper, they may give less information about communication skills, ability to work with others, commitment to students. It is also possible that the context in which the evidence in the portfolio was collected is very different from the context in which they will be required to teach. Sufficient time must be allowed during the day to examine the portfolios. It would be insulting to candidates to ask them to produce a portfolio and then only give them cursory attention.

each candidate their research output, their plans for publications and their academic expertise but what about their teaching qualities, how can you make a judgement about those?

(See Box 2 for a summary of ideas for collecting evidence on teaching skills at the interview stage.)

Given the limited time available on the interview day some choice will need to be made between the ideas below. However not all the activities need involve the panel, some can be to groups of peers or even students, but in these cases there must be a clear way in which the thoughts of these groups are communicated to the panel. A check list of qualities which can be scored on a three or five point scale by peers or students may be used to summarise their responses to each applicant.

1. PRESENTATION

The short presentation to the panel, or to the department, is perhaps the most commonly used technique and does give the opportunity to judge a person's presentation skills, clarity of speech, (sometimes) the use of visual aids and their ability to engage an audience. However, addressing an interview panel, or a group of peers, is not the same as teaching students, and some people's performance in these circumstances are affected by nerves, which makes it difficult to judge how they might perform in a lecture hall or seminar room. People can perform very differently in front of different audiences.

Despite this problem the presentation can be useful if it is directly related to the teaching responsibilities which the successful candidate will fulfil. For example, candidates can be specifically asked how they might approach some aspect of the teaching they will be required to deliver, or about an aspect of the course on which they will teach, or about how they have coped with teaching a part of the syllabus which students are known to find difficult.

It is important that the applicants are clearly briefed on the audience they are addressing, for example is it to a panel which includes some who are not experts in the subject or is it to a group of peers with subject expertise.

2. TRIAL SEMINAR

The applicants may be asked to lead a seminar on a topic which they will be teaching. The difference between a presentation and a seminar is that a seminar gives the applicant more opportunity to display teaching skills including facilitation skills. The participants of the seminar can be the staff of the department, students or staff and students.

Comments

Trial seminars are essentially a form of role play which allow the panel to observe teaching skills, although role plays can be difficult to make entirely convincing. They also take up more time. However, this can be a good opportunity to assess the teaching skills of applicants.

Suggestions

It is not unusual to ask candidates to run a seminar on their research, but topics, can be chosen which focus specifically on the applicant's approach to teaching, for example:

- How my research will inform my teaching
- My teaching philosophy
- How I would teach this course
- How I could contribute to the teaching of this department
- How can the curriculum be adapted for a multi-cultural student group?
- How do race or gender issues influence teaching and learning strategies?

3. IN-TRAY EXERCISE

The idea here is to present the applicants with a task or situation to which they are asked to respond or to explain how they would respond. These can be taken from any aspect of the lecturers' work such as, marking and commenting on an assignment, writing a handout, drafting a course outline or lecture or feedback form. Or the task can focus on how the applicant would deal with a problem such as teaching a unit with students with very different subject backgrounds, or a mixture of part-time and full-time students, or how to deal with the introduction of computer-based learning.

Comments

This is a useful method for assessing the likely way in which applicants will respond to situations in teaching and learning and assessment. The task may be set in advance or announced on the day.

It is important that all the applicants should have an equal chance to be able to complete the task. For example, be careful not to disadvantage applicants who may be unfamiliar with your type of institution, or the British system of HE, or who cannot complete the task without prior notice because of some disability.

4. TEACHING PORTFOLIO

Applicants can be asked to bring to the interview a portfolio of evidence relating to their current teaching and be asked to talk to the panel about the portfolio. Applicants will need to have precise instructions about what to include in their portfolio including guidance on length, indexing, types of evidence, and criteria against which the portfolio will be judged. Here your description of 'What makes a good teacher' will come in useful. For example, if you are interested in equal opportunities issues, indicate to candidates that evidence should be included on this topic. Or if you want student evaluations included in the portfolio, say so.

Comments

Not all staff will be familiar with the idea of teaching portfolios and so it is important not to fall into the trap of judging candidates, not on their teaching skills, but on their ability to put a portfolio together. Whilst portfolios can reveal a good deal about how good a person is on paper, they may give less information about communication skills, ability to work with others, commitment to students. It is also possible that the context in which the evidence in the portfolio was collected is very different from the context in which they will be required to teach. Sufficient time must be allowed for during the day to examine the portfolios. It would be insulting to candidates to ask them to produce a portfolio and then only give them cursory attention.

5. THE INTERVIEW

Finally, some thought needs to be given to which questions will be asked in the interview relating to teaching and learning. If you are particularly interested in the extent to which the applicants are open to change and development you can ask questions such as, 'What are your plans for developing your ability as a teacher?' or : 'How can this institution help you to develop as a teacher?' If you want to assess their ability to be reflective and analytical about their teaching a question which asks the candidate to assess their strengths and weaknesses as a teacher or give a critique of the way they were taught as an undergraduate can be revealing. Straight forward questions about how the applicant would assess students or what teaching and learning strategies would they would use are better if they given a more specific focus for example 'on a masters course with a strong overseas recruitment' or 'to assist students to develop their study skills' or 'helping a student with problems with writing academic English' or whatever is appropriate to the context in which they will be working. You may be more interested in the capacity of the person to contribute to innovations in the department, in which case suitable question include 'What innovation in your teaching are you particularly proud of?' or 'Which innovations do you have experience of which you would like to introduce here if you were appointed?'

Clearly it is important that all candidates are asked the same questions and have the same opportunity to answer in full. All candidates should have sufficient information about the teaching in the department to be able to answer the questions.

INFORMATION TO APPLICANTS

The interview day is an opportunity for you to tell the candidates about the department's and the University's policies. For example all candidates should be made aware of the University's policy regarding teaching and learning and staff development -

(a) Teaching and Learning Policy (if the institution has one)
(b) Identification of individual development needs through the annual Staff Appraisal and Development Scheme
(c) Participation in the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in HE or equivalent course where this exists
(d) Opportunity for all staff to register on other courses such as an MA in Learning and Teaching or other in-house awards
(e) Any institutional initiatives on teaching and learning technology, quality in teaching, investors in people or similar processes.

If the department has a Teaching and Learning Group, candidates can be informed of the activities and issues with which the group is concerned, or of any task groups or working parties which may be relevant to their areas of interest.

STEP SEVEN: After the Interview

Any contractual requirements will need to be explained to the candidate. For example at UEL, if a person appointed has less than two years experience of teaching in HE then they will be required to registered on the PG Certificate in Teaching and Learning in HE. The commitment to engage with the course will need to be explained and the appointee told about the arrangements for making contact with the Course Tutor.

As far as possible the outlines of the appointee's teaching commitments should be agreed so that he/she can begin planning and the opportunity to begin involvement in course planning in advance of the appointment date can be made available where this is possible. It is not acceptable to inform new staff about their teaching duties on appointment which may be only a week or two before the beginning of term.

If the person appointed is currently not too far away he/she can be invited to any departmental planning or staff development events.

APPLICANTS WITH NO PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

Most of the discussion and ideas so far have concentrated on eliciting evidence from those who have had previous experience of teaching, but what about those who have not had this experience? Are they likely to be disadvantaged in this process? We have probably all known staff who are new to teaching but who bring fresh enthusiasm and innovative ideas about how to approach the teaching of a topic. They will often be very willing to receive training and will develop rapidly into valued members of the teaching team. Any recruitment process must be careful not to miss the opportunity to appoint such people.

Fortunately all applicants by the time they apply for academic posts will have had considerable experience of teaching - from the receiving end! They can therefore be reasonably asked to outline their ideas about what makes a good teacher, how they would approach their teaching and how they would wish to see themselves developing in relation to teaching. They may have had some part-time experience running seminars or possibly attended a course for Graduate Teaching Assistants, in which case they can reflect critically on what teaching they have done, however limited that may have been. Their communication skills can be judged from a short presentation and their commitment to teaching tested by the quality of their reflections on their own experience.

A FINAL WORD

Probably no teachers in HE are appointed by virtue of their teaching skills alone, but in this paper I have suggested some ways in which the recruitment process can pay more attention to determining how good a teacher an applicant is likely to be by collecting some direct evidence of their skills and commitment. Implicit in what has been said is the presumption that a couple of questions at interview and the comments of a referee are not enough. There is plenty of evidence from recruitment to other walks of life to support this presumption.

Acknowledgements to ***Graham Gibbs*** *(Oxford Brookes) and Pat Hutchins. (American Association for HE) for providing some of the ideas incorporated into this paper.*

Dr David Gosling *is Head of Educational Development Services at the University of East London and was previously a lecturer in philosophy and education.*

Gibbs, G. **Survey of Appointment processes for new teaching posts** (1995, Unpublished).

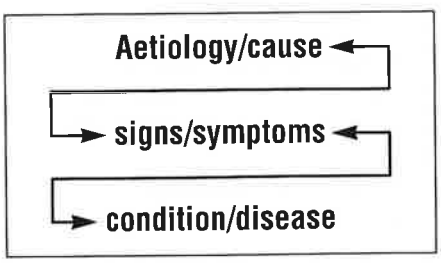
Academic Iatrogenesis

Mike Hayes returns to the fray. He suggests that issues of academic standards are best understood via a medical model. Just as doctors may induce illness in their patients by their treatment, so may academics induce sickness in their own institutions.

Even to the casual observer, nearly everyone it seems is talking or writing about standards – more specifically – standards in education. No single strata of our education system is outside the debate and there is an equal emphasis (or worry) about our pre-school education though all stages to our once prestigious doctorate level award. Almost daily, a Government or Opposition Spokesperson, a member of a Funding Council, or of the Quality Council, or of a Professional Body, etc will voice an opinion, sometimes substantiated by figures that have become facts, that standards of education in the UK are going up (or going down). This apparent inconsistency transcends politically influenced cynicism, for whether standards are going up going down is very unclear. For example, Sanders (1995) citing a report of the Higher Education Quality Council, indicates that a 2:1 Honours classification has in a space of two decades displaced the 2:2 grade as the modal degree. Additionally, there has been in recent years, evidence of a rising trend in the proportion of first class Honours being gained by undergraduates. That same month Tysome (1995) reported a higher education minister as warning that degree standards are slipping and that there is an erosion of intellectual content on degree courses, at least in English.

Headlines, statements, comments such as these are legion and for the serious analysts have to be balanced with the many meaningful reports, eg Corfield (1995), HEQC (1995), etc currently available and others just about to be published.

What the debate is really about is the health of our education system and the emphasis on standards has to be set in the context of a disease paradigm.



Fortunately, standards of lay knowledge of health care in the UK are such that the aetiology of many diseases is known and is often specific. There are some diseases that have as yet an unknown or uncertain cause. Similarly, most documented diseases have signs and symptoms which may be obscure to obvious, specific to non-specific. For many people the relationship of the symptom to the cause is unfathomable. Finally, the severity of the symptoms themselves may be disabling but may or may not be a significant factor in the morbidity of the disease, and of course some diseases are terminal. In those societies that have the wherewithal, either or both of the cause or symptoms might be treated and the axiom that 'prevention is better than cure' holds true. However, merely treating the symptoms has but short term gain even if the patient is a satisfied customer.

The standard of education is but a sign or symptom of the health of our education system, it is neither a cause nor yet the disease or outcome condition. Just as, for example, the temperature of a patient may increase or decrease, so can academic standards increase or decrease. The crucial difference is that the norm for temperature is known so that a pyrexia or hypothermia is well signposted.

Explaining drifting of academic standards from an imprecise start point is less than objective and probably unhelpful for corrective measures. What patient temperature and academic standards do have in common is that both can easily be manipulated by those that have the technology and the manipulation is often done internally with little recourse to external advice.

BA Combined Studies (Level III)
(Pharmacology with Education Studies)

Question 1:
Choosing from
a) modularisation
b) semesterisation
c) open book examinations
d) 100% course work assessment
e) group work

Complete the following:
Paracetamol is to pyrexia as .....
..... is to lower academic standard.

Self diagnosis and self treatment of common symptoms does work, but it is fallible. Further more, the situation may be exacerbated by the symptoms not simply being alleviated but actually getting worse as a consequence of the treatment or attempts at corrective measures.

BA Combined Studies (Level III)
(Human Nutrition with Assessment Strategy A)

Question 12:
Choosing from
a) single external examiner
b) multiple external examiner
c) monotechnic external examiner
d) polytechnic external examiner
e) no external examiner

Complete the following:
Vitamins are to a healthy diet as .....
..... is to fixing academic standard.

Treatment-induced disorder has been called iatrogenesis and that brought about by medical practitioners has been labelled clinical iatrogenesis. Illich (1984) has extended the concept of iatrogenesis to second and third levels and defined them as social and cultural iatrogenesis respectively. In essence, social iatrogenesis occurs because available medical practice actually sponsors sickness, creating a morbid society that encourages people to become consumers of a wide variety of medicines. This has the effect of increasing the number of surviving defectives who may be fit only for life under institutional care. That is, they are protected and furthermore may be unable to invigorate the political struggle to reshape the society that has made them sick. Illich (1984) explained cultural iatrogenesis as the ultimate backlash of hygienic progress and consists of a paralysis of healthy response to suffering, impairment and death. This leads to a managed maintenance of life with high levels of sub-lethal illness.

BA Combined Studies (Level III)
(Microbiology with Educational Technology B)

Question 33:
Choosing from
a) overcrowded lecture room
b) broken overhead projector
c) working overhead projector
d) dictation
e) photocopier failure

Complete the following:
Penicillin is to Staphylococcus aureus as .....
..... is to high academic standard.

In the macropolitics of the late nineties, Education and Health, if not twinned, are actually paralleled objectives. With respect to iatrogenesis – is there parallelism and to what extent are changing academic standards symptomatic of iatrogenic disorder?

Table 1 attempts to summarise some of the parallel features of medical practitioners and teachers. It is not comprehensive or intended to be.

There are of course divergencies, one obvious one is that at the outset the medical practitioner is dealing with a sick person, the teacher is not. That is not to say that as the education programme unfolds, for some and only a tiny minority, evidence of a personal malfunction eg dyslexia becomes apparent. In this sense the education system is functioning as a diagnostic tool and is both the cause and effect of the defectiveness, but it cannot be said to have induced the disorder.

What Table 1 shows is that there is a very high degree of 'self' and internalisation of the education system and to this extent, educators make it what it is. Those whose job it is, decide, determine and dictate academic standards and whether changes up or changes down occur, either by drift or by design, it is the responsibility of the prescriber and deliverer. In this way, changes above or below the agreed norm are equally wrong and may be equally dangerous and are potentially iatrogenic.

BA Combined Studies (Level III)
(Behavioural Science
with Assessment Strategy B)

Question 15:
Choosing from
a) HEQC Audit
b) HEFC( ) Assessment
c) Research Assessment Exercise 1996
d) Chartermark Application
e) Investing in People Application

Complete the following:
Gluttony is to obesity as is to .....
..... is to improving academic standards.

Table 1 attempts to summarise some of the parallel features of medical practitioners and teachers. It is not comprehensive or intended to be.

Patients	Pupils
Medical practitioner has restricted autonomy.	Teacher has restricted autonomy.
Medical practitioner prescribes others' products and creations.	Teacher delivers and administers others' products and creations.
Medical practitioners assess and evaluate using a wide range of subjective and objective criteria.	Teacher assesses and evaluates using a wide range of subjective and objective criteria.
Medical practitioner decides remedial action.	Teacher decides remedial action.
Medical practitioner may refer to more specialised authority.	Teacher may refer to more specialised authority.
Medical practitioner subject to audit and increasing accountability.	Teacher subject to audit, assessment and increasing public accountability.

It is easy to visualise how this academic iatrogenesis can spill over into social and cultural iatrogenesis within the educational system in the UK. What is alarming is that ready acceptance of such social and cultural iatrogenesis will manifest itself in so many ways. Products of the system being recycled as the next generation of educators are unlikely to be activated visionaries. Other products entering the commercial or manufacturing world are not likely to invigorate the system. At best it will be stagnation, more likely de-escalation and a loss of global competitiveness and prestige already hinted at by the Confederation of British Industry (1995).

It is now time to stop moaning and to recognise the problems of drifting academic standards as symptoms of something wrong and to curtail the measures that treat only symptoms. The reasons, the causes, the aetiology for the symptoms have to be explored. As there are connections between greed, gluttony and obesity of the individual so too are there connections between the massification of higher education, the greed, gluttony and obesity of institutions and differing academic standards. Effective good-health education has made us aware of the implications of obesity and most know that dieting involves an overall reduction in input and moreover an input of only quality nutrient. As the individual is largely in control of diet, so is the institution in control of its input — or ought to be. For real health, just dieting is not enough. Complementary regular exercise is a must. Sadly the exercises undertaken by most of the institutions of higher education have been chosen to accommodate the increased weight and volume of extra student numbers, ie we have inflicted upon ourselves the rigours of modularisation, increased flexibility, increased access, student charters, credit accumulation and transfer schemes, learning outcomes, capability, competence levels to name but a few. We chose, we implemented and without any sense of good experimentation and control.

Academic iatrogenesis – mea culpa.

* * *

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BOOKS

WHAT'S UP, DOC?

Innovations in Teaching Medical Sciences

Edited by Kate Exley and Reg Dennick

SEDA Paper 93, 1996, £14

ISBN 0 946815 24 0

If medical schools throughout the country take note of the innovations outlined in this publication then gone will be the days of 'Carry on Doctor'.

As a result of recommendations made by the General Medical Council in 'Tomorrow's Doctors' (1993), many British medical schools have made radical changes to the ways in which medical students' learning is organised and facilitated. This interesting publication provides a brief insight into 19 innovative developments within the teaching of Medical Sciences, mainly within the UK with a small number from Europe and the United States.

Within the case studies the reader is offered the opportunity to explore the way in which individual medical departments have tackled such challenges as facilitating large groups, peer assessment, competence based skills acquisition, computer assisted learning, curriculum innovations and problem solving.

Whilst primarily written for 'medical scientists and clinicians who wish to develop or change their teaching' the readings would prove equally useful to other Health Care professional teachers as they strive to improve the nature and delivery of multi-disciplinary health care to ever-changing client groups.

Many of the methods and strategies used could be readily adapted and transferred to other disciplines and, having read this publication, even the most didactic of teachers will find themselves inspired to innovate.

Lyn Shipway
Anglia Polytechnic University

IMPRESSIVE PRACTICE

Developing Skill-Based Curricula through the Disciplines: case studies of good practice in geography

Edited by Alan Jenkins and Andrew Ward

SEDA Paper 89, Staff and Educational Development Association (1995), £14

ISBN 0 946815 98 4

This book consists of 17 examples of how geographers have built skill development into their academic programmes and an introduction by Alan Jenkins on why we should be seeking to develop transferable skills in our students. The emergence of this as an issue in higher education over the last ten years should be seen as one instance of a broad repositioning of the role and purpose of education in society. The introduction of the National Record of Achievement, key skills at 'A' level, NVQs and GNVQs are all part of the same process, and there are those in higher education who, recognising this, argue that the introduction of skill development compromises our prime academic purpose. However, what these examples show is that presenting the issue of transferable skills as a polarisation between knowledge and skills is specious and completely misrepresents what can be achieved.

What is impressive about these case studies is the imagination that has gone into developing learning situations appropriate for the development of particular skills – role plays, working to consultancy briefs, student involvement in curriculum design, student conferences. It is a rich diet indeed and certainly puts the role of the lecture in its proper perspective. What is more, the principles on which these examples are based are not solely the preserve of Geography and are transferable to other disciplines. Despite the range of terms which the authors use to describe their skill development objectives (once again the need for the mapping and codification of transferable skills is demonstrated), certain themes are apparent. Dominant are group work experiences and presentation skills. Others include technical skills (computing, research), alternative communication skills (writing in genre) and study skills. Three case studies deal with profiling as a mechanism for capturing attainment.

Particularly useful for those who want to experiment themselves are those studies which provide a clear evaluation of the initiative. Glynne Watkin's review of work placements provides sound advice. Sue Bushill gives examples of other subjects which could adopt her model of a group work assignment. Several authors provide advice on transferability. For anyone who wants to introduce student participation in course design look at the papers by Tony Parsons and Peter Knight and by Heather Norris Nicholson. Two of the studies specifically focus on employment areas – Tim Unwin's on viticulture and Clive Morphet's on retailing – and their message is that subject knowledge as well as skills can be important for the employment market. (Incidentally, I was not surprised to learn that once entry restrictions to the viticulture course were removed student enrolment increased – when wine tasting was on the curriculum?) Wearing my hat as a geographer, the initiative that impressed me most was the one described by Susan Smith, Liz Bondi and Gillian Rose – a decade long study of Edinburgh with a contribution from each cohort of students. If I was an educational developer in Edinburgh I would want to be in there, helping them define the learning gains to students and monitoring the impact of the project within the department, the student body, the university and the community.

In demonstrating that it is perfectly possible to integrate knowledge acquisition and skill development, the case studies do not represent a task completed. They raise important questions for the role and actions of educational developers. The case studies mainly show innovation within a module. The issue for educational developers is to extend this to the whole curriculum. Ultimately the issue of skill development connects with the big debate about 'graduateness'. Individual initiative has created the momentum. The task now for educational developers is to capture and sustain it.

There is one further point – to SEDA. The page layout and design do not represent the quality of the content. Please consider a review and redesign.

Peter Newby
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NOT ABOUT MANAGING

Higher Education Management

Edited by David Warner and David Palfreyman

SRHE and Open University Press, 1996, p/b £19.99, h/b £45

ISBN 0 335 19569 5

This is not a book about academic leadership or management; it is about the work of what the editors refer to in their introduction as 'administrators', who run service departments or units. As an academic I found it quite interesting to find out about some of the issues facing managers in those units of higher education establishments, but I don't think I would have been interested enough to read this book had I not been reviewing it, and am left with the question of who will read this book, and therefore what it's for.

The book may be of interest to aspiring

managers, academic or 'service', in Higher Education and does effectively give an overview of the main areas affecting Higher Education Management as they define it. The chapters, which cover a range from financial and personnel management to the management of estates and student support services, are very general and in many ways superficial. The text is therefore not going to be useful as a guide to the management of services in HE, except in a very general sense.

At the same time the book does not explore the issues, and takes a very functionalist view of management, mentioning only in passing political problems about the nature of management in HE, before going on to discuss the issues and processes of administration. The book is therefore limited as an analysis of management in HE, and certainly avoids many political issues. For example in discussing the governance of universities the point is made that Governors have nothing to gain from their membership. While this is financially true,. it is an oversimplification, not only because they may be seeking a number of other benefits, but also because you can reverse it and say that they have little to lose either.

This book may be useful if you feel you should be involved next time you are asked to comment on your institution's estates policy, or other service area. What is worrying however, given the division that the editors make between academic and administrative/service areas, are the grey areas around student support, postgraduate and research organisation and management, and academic support services which are included here.

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SINKING AND SWIMMING
In at the Deep End: first experiences of university teaching
Edited by David Allan
Unit for Innovation in Higher Education/THES (1996) £7.95
ISBN 0 901 800 90 2

This book is of interest to all University teaching personnel – new or well experienced. For those of us that have been through the angst, frustration, elation and fear of the beginning of a University teaching career (at least for me), this book conjures up memories that are vivid and sometimes revisited in my nightmares. For those just beginning it is a cautionary tale of silly restrictions ('We don't teach. We tutor or facilitate), hard work, a lot of worry and some great joy.

The book is made up of a collection of 14 word-pictures painted by new appointees to the world of University lecturing and tutoring. They provide us with an insight into their thoughts, worries and situations. They give advice to others approaching this situation in ways that sometimes seem as if they were giving the advice to themselves – or wishing someone had when they began.

In an excellent introduction David Allan, editor of the book, pulls threads of meaning out of the individual contributions. Among others he identifies the scepticism held concerning the value of 'traditional' lecturing – what many call the full-frontal approach – lecturer at the front, standing, speaking for the entire hour. He also points out the demand for creative alternative instructional means to be used. However this demand comes with very little support in terms of training, new materials, etc.

I read this book eagerly and found myself going back to the chapters which most reflected my own experiences. It is a stimulating record of experience. For those of us in the position to influence the world of the new lecturer, the book provides direct and convincing advice. For those just beginning, it paints the terrain and occasionally throws the lifesavers.

Cyril Kesten
Univerity of Regina

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT S&M
53 Questions and Answers about Modules and Semesters
Graham Bradley and Steve Marshall
Technical and Educational Services Ltd, 1995, £10
ISBN 0 947885 90 0

This new addition to the *Interesting Ways to Teach* series does not answer all the questions one might ask in relation to modularity and semesterisation, but does address most of the 'big ones' such as 'Why do it in the first place'? Indeed, one of the book's major strengths is in providing a clear rationale for modularity and semesterisation and an understanding of their origins. Twice the authors remind us that the first modular system was introduced in the Ivy League Harvard in 1869 and that the Oxbridge tripos awards might also be considered as modular.

Unlike other guides in this series, the questions posed here often lead to discursive answers and there are some questions the authors leave unanswered, such as the future of degree classification and the best time of the year to start the first semester. The authors acknowledge the possibility of confusion and possible resistance that modularity can generate amongst both faculty and students, let alone the chaos that can be created by the necessary introduction of a student management information system.

All colleagues will find the discussion of learning methods valuable and the ways in which modularity can support 'best practice' in supporting student learning. The authors' reiteration of the Wingspread Report on Higher Education in the USA, in response to how modules are best delivered, followed by a checklist of criteria for getting assessment strategies right within the context of avoiding over-assessment, are jewels to be shared with us all. It is a pity that this volume was not available when most of us 'went modular', but there is a lot that is helpful to those who are concerned to make modular and semesterised systems work effectively.

Steve Outram
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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES:
Towards Better Practices
Maureen Farish, Joanna McPake, Janet Powney, Gaby Weiner
Open University Press, 1995, pbk £16.99
ISBN 0 335 19416 8

Equal opportunities in Further and Higher Education remains very much an untheorised and under-researched area of work, and it is always good to see initiatives which address this issue. This book constitutes a substantial piece of work, focusing on case studies of three different educational institutions: one FE college, one 'old' and one 'new' university. It aims to investigate what happens to institutional equal opportunities policies once they have been passed, and concentrates particularly on staffing issues. A multi-method/multi-theory approach is adopted including interviews, observation of meetings, document analysis, questionnaires and work shadowing, in an attempt to deconstruct policy and policy making.

Unfortunately, in terms of probing and exploring the institutions which the authors visited, it has to be said that this book is a disappointment. Perhaps the very boundaries of the project, strictly defined to achieve ESRC funding, are responsible. The focus on policy has produced a book which can seem outdated and superficial. Policies may change whilst deeper power structures persist. An examination of the culture of each organisation, such as that employed so effectively by Cynthia Cockburn in 'In the Way of Women: Men's Resistance to Sex Equality in Organisations' (1992) could, I feel, have borne more fruit. The pace of change in FE and HE means that the structures described will often no longer exist, whilst the inequalities inscribed within the institution persist unexplored. A more subtle and interrogative approach was needed, and this their method-

ology does not provide. Their analysis seems a blunt instrument for the complex and contradictory worlds they are entering, and it is also difficult to find evidence of their collaborative feminist ways of working within the main body of the text.

Nevertheless, taken on its own terms, this book provides a useful resource for those wishing to develop equal opportunities policies and procedures, and tries to suggest positive strategies for the future. In a field where mutual support and information is crucial, this is an important contribution. As an addition to the literature and debate on equal opportunities it should certainly be welcomed, even if it has missed some opportunities itself.

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MASTER THIS PROGRAMME!
Negotiating Mastery: developing good practice in individually negotiated masters degrees
Edited by Mike Taylor and Karen Dobbyn
University Centre for Accreditation and Negotiated Award, Anglia Polytechnic University, 1996, £15
ISBN 0-907262-51-1

The changing nature of university learning, credentialism, new fields of knowledge, and the need for multidisciplinary perspectives on problem-solving, have all contributed to more flexible approaches to the granting of university degrees.

As the authors of this booklet point out, institutions have all too often welcomed mature students who have subsequently been 're-educated into the norms of the academic world'. However, this has entailed a breach between practice and theory which has not always been productive, either for the university sector or for corporations, or indeed for the individual involved.

Both private companies and individuals whose professional situations were not adequately catered for by conventional coursework masters were the stimulus for the development of the 'negotiated masters' at Anglia Polytechnic University. Some students had no undergraduate degree; others had undertaken company in-house training, OUUK units, or certified units for which they wanted credit; others were unable to attend on-campus classes.

This concise booklet provides a blueprint for an apparently successful 'non-programmed programme' of individually-tailored masters by coursework and project/dissertation.

Careful evaluation of previous study/experience for equivalence or credit, rigorous procedures for application and acceptance of a proposal, intensive work by administrative and academic staff in liaison between external organisations, the student, and the university system, as well as determination by the student, are all required. As the authors admit, this route is not for everyone.

Indeed, one of the useful elements of this outline is the description of the characteristics of the student who is likely to succeed: he or she must be someone capable of working with ambiguity, who already demonstrates independent (even solitary) learning abilities, and who does not require a linear structured programme.

Nor are all staff suited to the supervision of such a student. The supervisor – manager and mentor really – must be willing to meet the high time/energy requirements of the arrangement, and must be a juggler of the disparate demands of the existing university culture, the corporate culture in which the project is set, and the student's needs and expertise. The university itself must be prepared to bend or alter its rules, and tolerate a reasonable amount of devolved power, unusual in a university!

Separate sections of the text consider student requirements, recogition of prior learning/experience, the dissertation/project, quality assurance, resource implications, and one sample of a project.

One criticism: I would have liked more, and more detailed, case studies of how the programme works.

Nevertheless, the booklet is recommended for all research centres and research studies offices, for staff developers, managers and administrators, as a guide to what is possible, with effort, in the quest to make the university sector more open and flexible.

Yoni Ryan
Queensland University of Technology

PUBLISH AND BE .....
How to Get Research Published in Journals
Abby Day
Gower, 1996, £16.95
ISBN 0 566 07767 1

As the pressure on academics in higher education to publish in high quality journals increases, good books which guide first-time or experienced authors through the publication maze are at a premium. A number of books are available on this topic, but Abby Day's stands out as more readable and a lot more practical than many of its competitors.

Covering a range of topics, including 'Why Publish?', 'Why Not Publish?' and 'Targeting Journals', Abby Day looks at the whole publication process. She offers a realistic background to academic publishing which would help many readers, but especially young researchers, make sense of the conflicting opinions they will hear from colleagues, supervisors, journal editors and reviewers. Authors who have published a number of papers commonly view journal publishing as a 'system', within which good or bad luck can affect the process of a paper. The best paper can be 'lucky' or 'unlucky' in the reviewers it is sent to and an acceptance of this system is essential to preserve the author's morale when comments come back from reviewers via the journal.

Abby Day treats the art of writing publishable papers as a learned skill which will enhance research, but which is not learned instinctively during the research process. In doing so, she has produced a book which will be of great interest to all those who want to improve their writing and the ease with which they get papers published, and of special interest to research students who are writing papers for publication for the first time.

Claire E A Seaman
Queen Margaret College, Edinburgh

REFLECTING THE NEW
An Enterprising Curriculum: teaching innovations in higher education.
Edited by Ian Sedden & John Kremer
School of Psychology, The Queen's University of Belfast
Belfast, HMSO, 1994, £14.95

Enterprise, since its inception, has provoked debate in some quarters as to its usefulness. In this readable book the editors have been able to draw together a selection of case studies detailing innovations which have grown out of the Enterprise Initiative at Queen's University, Belfast. The book is relevant and provides the reader with insights into the realities of implementing teaching change in higher education.

The book comprises twelve chapters, the first two and the last one of which deal with issues generic to the notion of Enterprise. Chapter 1 discusses change in specified areas as the result of Enterprise while Chapter 2 delves more into the management and implementation of the University's Enterprise Initiative. The final chapter, Evaluating Enterprise: Inside Looking In, identifies some of the difficulties faced in evaluating Enterprise, the approach adopted at Queen's, and the reporting of the results to various audiences.

These three chapters provide much on which the reader can reflect. However, the reviewers found the remaining nine chapters more interesting because it was here that the reader finds out more about what actually academics did in their funded projects. In

essence each of the chapters describes the aims and experiences of the particular authors. Such aspects of teaching in higher education as assessment, involving industrial partners, curriculum design, group work, teaching methodologies etc. are the focus of the innovations and, while they are described within particular departmental contexts, the issues they identify will be of interest to readers in other departments and indeed in other universities. Not all of the author reflections paint a bright picture. At times the reality of the status of teaching in some departments is evident. David Hughes, the author of a chapter titled 'Team Building Through Outdoor Pursuits', records '...these courses were seen as an additional workload by my own department and no consideration or recognition was given for the amount of time taken to set up and run the courses. (p 92).

A useful feature of the book is the practical examples provided. Classwork exercises along with marking and evaluation guides and assessment procedures used in some projects are given. Chapter 3, 'Self, Peer and Group Assessment Procedures', includes a more than useful bibliography of assessment and student learning in higher education.

Inevitably, books of this nature must be more relevant to those familiar with Enterprise. However, as the trend for the enhancement of teaching becomes more recognised worldwide and academics come to see that how they teach does affect student learning, then books such as this will become more sought after.

Andes Cheung and Ken Stafford
City University of Hong Kong

DEVELOPING UNIVERSITY
English Teaching
Edited by Colin Evans
The Edwin Mellen Press

This wonderful book recalls the sharing and development experiences of the first DUET workshop/conference, which I was lucky to attend in 1980. It explains and clarifies the underlying principles of the project and focuses on substantial changes it can help to make in practice. It fuels:

- a new dynamic understanding of the (often only semiconscious) teaching and learning values and beliefs of many of us in the humanities
- the pedagogical practices which can help to bring to fruition the kinds of creative and responsive, reflective and effective learning which our students need in all subjects.

There is a dearth of work on teaching and learning English at university level, ironically since English teachers are likely to be reflective, to take into account the experiential and emotional responses of students. Colin Evans defines the book's scope: 'English is the flagship of the humanities and its problems and concerns are shared by teachers of modern languages, history, philosophy – and even by the social sciences.' DUET is 'an attempt to influence the way that English and related subjects are taught in the university – which means an attempt to influence both the way they and the act of teaching itself are defined and conceived by the university'.

The book explains the processes and achievements of DUET, a project whose underpinning structure, aims and ethics are based on action research. DUET is a yearly, week-long workshop/conference for university English teachers and a network too. Woven of strands comprising group processes, creative work and enabling models of teaching/learning strategies and situations, it is an empowering mixture of structure and subjectivity. DUET-nurtured reflection and changes include:

- questioning assumptions of classroom authority
- involvement of the emotions in a structured way in student response
- student autonomy in learning
- recognising the unconscious in reading, study and the classroom
- crossing disciplinary boundaries
- how teams and groups respond and affect their learning situations and experiences.

Getting, communicating and encouraging knowledge development, understanding, integrating personal and analytical responses are all fundamental.

John Broadbent, DUET's founder, builds on Carl Rogers to relate oppressive teaching practices with their continuation in the world of work, criticising 'the oppressive lecture, the flabby pseudo-discussion.' David Punter illuminates ways readers and students make meanings of text with and beyond deconstructionist critics. English teaching in the DUET mould resembles successful responses (in curricula and teaching/learning practice) to interdisciplinarity, feminism and multiculturalism. Jane Aarons considers how DUET helped her realise and overcome feminist discomfiture in the academic lecturer role, to provide 'an open space in which to recognise and communicate specific personal responses to a text, from which political or theoretical understanding might be evolved through group discussion'.

Barry Palmer concentrates on using creative writing to enable students to work with texts in cultural context, conscious of interplay between 'creativity and cultural experience'. Sue Habeshaw's contribution fulfils expectations of her work's practicability, looking clearly and positively at characteristic DUET sessions, explaining how you enable students to recognise values, feelings, personal responses, their abilities to communicate to themselves and others.

DUET 'is about a unique attempt to know the whole system and the relation of its parts through experiential, collaborative, action research'. Immensely refreshing and stimulating, this timely book addresses practices of change in the context of mass higher education, shrinking resources, accountability and the fundamental importance of student creativity and learning.

Gina Wisker
Anglia Polytechnic University

EXPENSIVE PARENTING
It's Quite an Education: supporting your son or daughter through university
Edited by Lynne Boundy
Unit for Innovation in Higher Education/THES, Lancaster University, 1996, £7.95
ISBN 0 901800 988

This collection of personal narratives gives an insight into the support, both financial and emotional, which parents, like myself, find themselves giving to student children in these days of reduced funding. It covers everything you need to know: helping with UCAS, choosing courses, coping with clearing, where to live, how to organise finances and how to cope with the constant disruption that is three years of a degree. As one of the parents in this collection states, 'You stop being a parent and become a money provider and taxi driver.'

Contributors include single parents and parents with up to four children all at university at the same time. One couple were made redundant just prior to their son going to university. Forced to use their redundancy payment to clear debts, they then spend the next three years learning how to cope on nearly zilch benefit, alongside their son on his meagre basic grant. He does rather better than them, as it happens. But the tale is full of poignancy, full of distress at not being able to help one's offspring at this vital time. If reading about others solves one's own problems then this collection certainly covers most eventualities.

There's the couple who support their son through buying a flat instead of renting. He, and they, learn far more than the content of the degree course, like coping with council tax and Scottish law. And there are some recurring images which mirrored my own experience as a parent, like racing up and down motorways delivering offspring and duvets and hi-fis to different sites, in some cases three children to different universities.

And the cost of keeping them there, between £3K and £4K in 1995-6, and that's only for 30 weeks of the year. The rest of the time they come back, with their duvets, hi-fis . . . and mounds of dirty washing.

But everyone's experiences are different. There are parents who are taking their degree at the same time, ones who can't wait for the kid to vacate so they can rent the room and the tender image of a mother listening to her son playing the piano before leaving home.

As if that isn't enough there are the tales of those who love their courses and those who hate them. Those who return after a month, those who get sick and those who just can't cope. And many of them return home after graduation, but they've changed, and so have their parents. But then that's as much a learning experience as the degree, isn't it?

Julie Wright
NCET

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This is SEDA's YEAR OF STUDENT MOTIVATION
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***Dr. Ekkehard Kopp** of University of Hull receives SEDA's first Professional Development in Higher Education Recognition Certificate from Elaine Crosthwaite of HEQC.*

--- *Press Release* ---

Professional Development in Higher Education

SEDA's newest accreditation scheme, the PDHE, was formally launched at the SEDA conference in Birmingham in December.

The PDHE scheme is suitable for all staff in HE and aims:

➤ to accredit the practice of working in HE by channelling experience and expertise gained elsewhere into the context of HE;

➤ to build bridges between the different categories of HE staff by fostering staff development delivered by, and to, a wide range of people;

➤ to encourage staff to reflect on their working practices.

The launch was attended by about 100 people. Speakers included Professor Gus Pennington (UCoSDA), Elaine Crosthwaite (Quality Enhancement Group, HEQC) and Dr Ekkehard Kopp (University of Hull).

Dr Kopp was formally presented with the first PDHE recognition certificate by Elaine Crosthwaite for the University of Hull's Diploma in General Management Skills.

Registrations are now being taken for the PDHE scheme

For more information contact the SEDA Office on 0121 440 5021 or e-mail office@seda.demon.co.uk

Forum

Forum is designed to allow debaters to express their views at longer length than is usual in a Letters page. Debaters are allowed up to 800 words to make their points clear. All the Editor asks is that authors focus on ideas, refrain from criticism of the person, and be as concise as reasonably possible within the constraints of the word limit.

This time we have allowed Martin Luck to take up even more space than is usual, because his comments are really worth considering, and he needs the information in the two boxes to make the contrasts to which he draws attention clear. Readers are invited to comment in turn. Contributions for Forum should be sent to *Ivan Moore* at University of Ulster.

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH PROJECTS – WHAT ARE THEY WORTH?

Project work is frequently a key component of undergraduate courses. It takes a variety of forms but allows students to leave the formality of the lecture or seminar room and study a topic to a greater depth than the broad curriculum otherwise allows. Projects give students the space to demonstrate their capacity for independent, analytical and critical thought. In some cases, the project may even develop into a mini-dissertation, reminiscent of and preparation for post-graduate research.

Why is this important educational tool so seldom discussed? As staff responsible for setting, supervising and assessing undergraduate projects, what do we see as their purpose? Do we all approach them in a similar way? What can students realistically expect to get out of them? Do departments have the facilities to provide for in depth project work, or do they just send students off to the library for an extended read?

Should there be some standard means of assessment, some agreed weighting? What skills can employers expect graduates to have gained from project work?

My own faculty has used the research project as a core element in its honours courses for very many years.

It is proud of this fact and always keen to play up its value when talking to prospective students, teaching assessors, external examiners or anyone else willing to listen. Unfortunately, this arrogance is based on ignorance: we have never established whether our approach is usual or exceptional. Nor have we ever tried to find out if we could be doing a better job. Looking around the rest of my university recently, I detect great variation between departments in the emphasis placed on projects, with no attempt at comparison within or between institutions. There seem to be no established guidelines for good practice, no agreement about marking, no agreed measure of the project's worth.

Profiles of final level undergraduate research projects as used in three departments at the University of Nottingham. "Research Project" means a piece of research, a dissertation or other extended study, involving the acquisition and critical assessment of information and usually resulting in a printed report.

	PROFILE 1	PROFILE 2	PROFILE 3
Faculty type	Applied science	Arts	Vocational (Medical, intercalated)
Compulsory/optional	Compulsory	Optional	Compulsory
Duration	15 months	1 semester	1 semester
Credits	45[1]	10[1]	20% of degree
Student input	1.5 days/week	75 h	2–5 days/week
Group size	1	1	1 or 2
Students/staff member	2–5	2–3	4–6
Format	Bound dissertation (50-100pp) Seminar (15 min) Poster display	Unbound dissertation, (ca. 5000 words)	Bound dissertation (20–30pp) Seminar (30–45 min)
Regulations set by	Faculty	Supervisor	Department
Marked by	Supervisor One other staff member	Two staff members Blind marking	Supervisor Two other staff members
Moderated by	External examiner	External examiner	External examiner
Student motivation[2] (1 – low, 5 – high)	4.5	5	4.5
Educational value[2] (1 – low, 5 – high)	5	4	5
Publishable result			
(1-unlikely, 5 -likely)	3.5	1	5
Transferable skills	Many (general and subject-related)	A few	Many
Professional value	Usually	Occasionally	Indirectly
Limiting resources	Staff time Equipment Consumable costs	None	Staff time Research funds

[1] The standard honours degree comprises 360 credits
[2] Opinion of staff

Box 1

To focus the discussion, Box 1 gives three contrasting profiles from examples at Nottingham. Departments are described by broad type rather than subject so as to raise the discussion beyond a detailed comparison of subject-specific requirements. If we are to find common ground or swap examples of good practice, the nature of the discipline should not be paramount. Box 2 suggests some headings under which projects might be compared.

A common theme that has emerged from talking to colleagues at Nottingham is that of time and resources.

Academics always moan about these issues, of course, but there is a real concern here. Projects are time and energy consuming. Colleagues say that their teaching budgets simply will not allow them to fund projects properly and that with increasing class sizes the omens for improvement are not auspicious. They often find themselves either relying on their own precious research funds, with no guarantee of an RAE-valid outcome, or deliberately restricting project choice to topics with minimal cost implications.

Most projects, by their very nature, must be carried out as individual efforts: with increasing student/staff ratios the academic time needed to offer real support and guidance comes increasingly at a premium. Of course, if looked at simply as a means of imparting knowledge to groups of students, projects are undoubtedly very inefficient. But if that is all we are trying to do we might as well retreat behind the office door and revert to courses built entirely around the lecture-to-library-to-exam approach (perhaps there are colleagues who do this!). There must be more to it than that. In these days of teaching assessment, that extra something needs to be defined, given a value and accorded the recognition it deserves.

I maintain a strong personal belief in the importance of projects in undergraduate education, and I doubt that I worship alone in this regard. Enthusiasm stems partly from departmental habit, as indicated earlier, but more importantly from a philosophical position regarding the real role of universities. My view is that excellent research and excellent teaching are inseparable. On the one hand, academic research benefits immeasurably from the discipline of having to explain to others what you are doing and getting them to consider the problem too. On the other, university teachers are only doing a good and proper job if they instill in their students a feel for the uncertainty, inadequacy and excitement of current knowledge. Research projects, effectively used, do both of these things and should produce students better equipped to make critical use of knowledge. (This position means, of course, that the concept of "teaching only" and "research only" universities is a non-starter). Others may take a less dramatic or more polarised view of their academic role – I would be most interested to hear from them.

Criteria for analysis and comparison of project use.

1. Formal arrangements
- Are projects optional or compulsory?
- When is the project carried out: At what point in the course? Which semesters?
- How long does it last?
- How many credits does it count?
- What proportion (%) of the total degree mark does it count?
- How many hours or days of work per week are expected of the student?
- Are students expected to work during the vacations to any significant extent?
- Do students work single/in pairs/in groups?

2. Supervision
- Who takes academic responsibility (academic/research/PG/other staff)?
- Who actually supervises (academic/research/PG/other staff)?
- Who choses the subject (student/staff/both)?
- Who designs the project/plans the work (student/staff/both)?
- How much guidance is given once the project is underway (eg: little guidance, guidance as needed, close supervision, weekly/termly meetings etc)?
- On average, how many projects is each staff member responsible for?
- What kind of preparation are students given for their project work?:

3. Format
- How is the work presented (bound, verbal, poster etc)
- What is the usual length?
- Who sets the regulations for format and presentation (Section/Department/Faculty/Supervisor)?

4. Assessment
- Is the work assessed with reference to stated criteria? If not, how is it assessed?
- What aspects of the work are assessed?
- Are interim marks given? If so, when?
- Who marks the work?
- Is it double marked?
- Is it blind marked?
- Does an external examiner assess the work? If so, which aspects of it?

5. Resources
- What resources have to be provided to facilitate research projects?
- Where do the funds come from to supply these resources?

6. Student attitude and motivation
- Are students well motivated to do project work?
- Do they put in amounts of time and effort commensurate with credit rating?

7. Effectiveness
- How effective is project work as a method of teaching?
- How effective is project work as a method of learning?
- Do student projects have any effect on the department's research output?
- How often does student project work in result in a publication?

8. Educational/professional value
- Do potential employers see the project as a valuable part of undergraduate education?
- What transferable skills do students gain from their projects?
- Does the project prepare them for later professional development?

Box 2

***Martin Luck**, Lecturer in Animal Physiology, University of Nottingham, Sutton Bonington Campus, Loughborough LE12 5RD. e-mail: s6zml@nottingham.ac.uk*

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