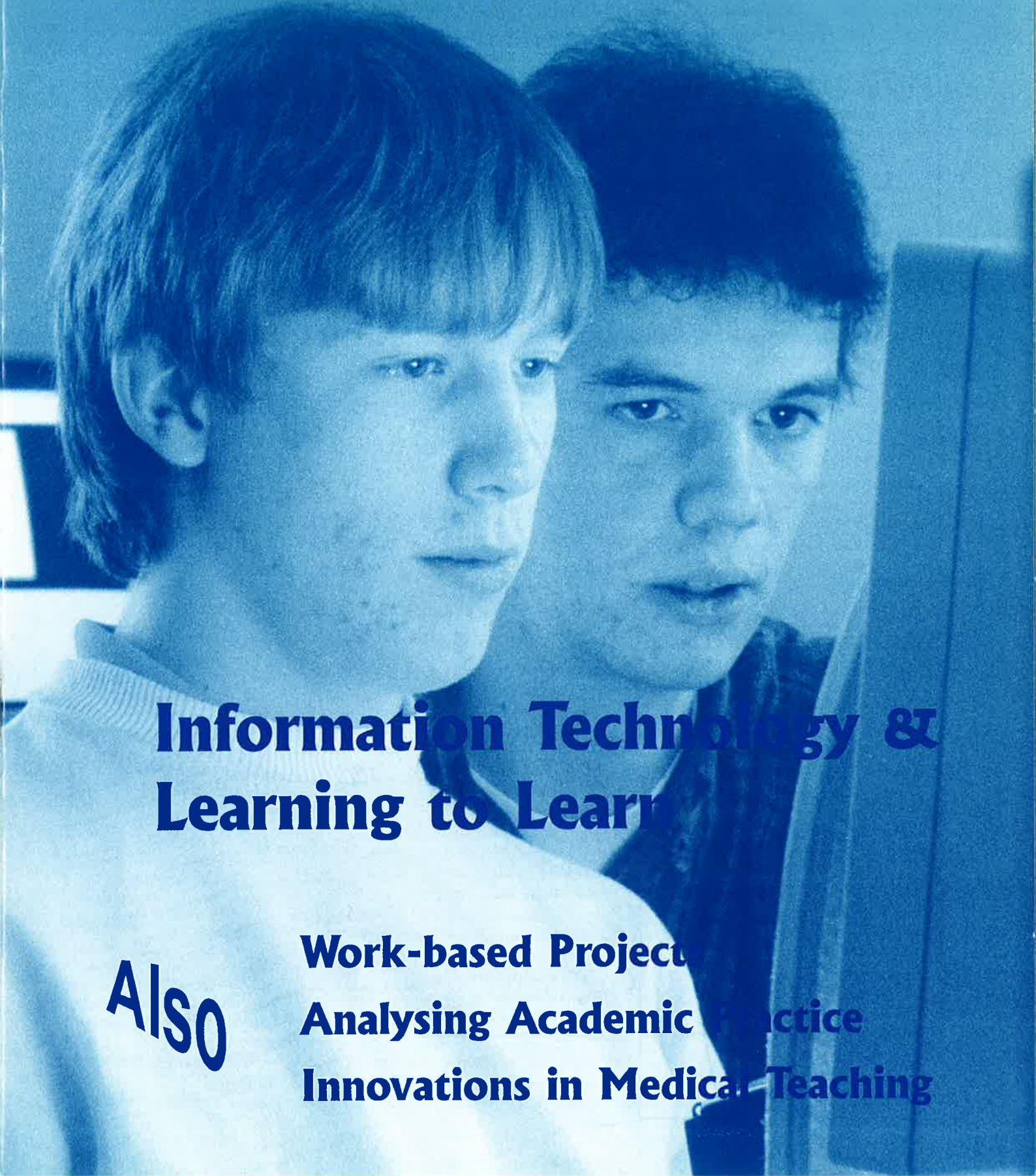
the New Academic

The Journal of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education Summer 1998, Vol.7 No.2



Information Technology & Learning to Learn

Also

Work-based Project

Analysing Academic Practice

Innovations in Medical Teaching

SEDA

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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.
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Information for Contributors

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

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

All material should be submitted in three copies, typewritten on single side of A4, double-spaced. Submission of a paper to ***The New Academic*** implies that it has not been published elsewhere *and* that it is not currently being considered for publication by any other editor or publisher. All submissions should be sent direct to Ivan Moore, Editor-in-Chief, at Ulster University (address on p.1).

Everyone involved with ***The New Academic*** works on it only part of the time, and so delays in dealing with submissions are inevitable. All papers will be reviewed by at least two people, and expert advice sought where appropriate. If you wish prompt acknowledgement, please enclose stamped addressed envelope: return postage is essential if you wish your script to be returned in the event of non-acceptance. To speed production once your paper has been accepted, you will be asked to send finalised material on floppy disk.

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, as in the following examples:

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

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

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Contributions to debates are always welcome, and may be of any length up to 800 words (maximum): the shorter, the more likely space will be found. Forum commentary may be on any topic relevant to teachers in HE. All contributions may be subject to editing. Send to Ivan Moore or direct to the Editor.

Acronyms used in *The New Academic*:

APEL	Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning
BTEC	Business and Technical Education Council
CAL	Computer Assisted Learning
CAT	Credit Accumulation and Transfer
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
EHE	Enterprise in Higher Education
FSEDA	Fellow of SEDA
HE	Higher Education
HEFC	Higher Education Funding Council
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Council
HND	Higher National Diploma
IT	Information Technology
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
SEEC	South East England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer
SRHE	Society for Research in Higher Education
THES	Times Higher Education Supplement

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY,
SEDA
5 YEARS OLD, MAY 1998

EDITORIAL

AFTER DEARING

Many changes will be needed in HE if Dearing's recommendations are all to be followed, and this Summer issue continues our examination of some of the implications of some of his proposals.

Dearing recommended that all graduates be expected to have acquired key skills on completion of their course, and among these, the two important skills examined by **Graham Walton** and **Catherine Edwards** in our cover story: the use of information technology and learning how to learn.

As Co-Director and Project Coordinator respectively of the IMPEL2 eLib Project (for those of you who don't know - and I didn't - this is the IMpact on People of Electronic Libraries), they report on an important investigation into how well HE institutions are prepared for the electronic library of the future. You have no doubt guessed - most are not well prepared at all. They identify a number of issues that need to be resolved, and these include not only the vexed question of resources, but also decisions about who teaches what, and when, and how. Use of IT will be both an essential skill and a part of each student's toolkit in learning to learn in the coming millenium.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Dearing's recommendations are wide-ranging, and include the suggestion that students be given opportunities to benefit from experience in the workplace. **Jenny Rowley** outlines the special problems students can face when they undertake work-based projects, based on her years of experience in both higher education and in business. She has some very sensible and sensitive suggestions for supervisors who need to ensure their students are armed to overcome the hazards inherent in such projects.

ACADEMIC PRACTICE AS TECHNICIST OR SOCIAL?

Exploring the nature of academic education, **Katrina Miller** suggests that much teaching and learning in HE is based on an implicit model of student as in deficit, with tutor as formal conduit through which legitimate knowledge is channelled. This model she labels *technicist*, and contrasts it with a *social* model, which - among other things - acknowledges multiple ways of knowing.

This paper is extremely interesting, well worth reading several times, and thinking of the implications. Are we trying to help our students develop decontextualised and functional skills - as the previous paragraphs on Dearing might suggest? Do we believe there is an accepted canon of knowledge it is our duty to impart? Or are we more aware of cultural determination? Does it perhaps - as I suspect - depend on what particular subject you are teaching? Views on this welcome!

One jarring note, though. At one point, Miller suggests that it is "surprising" that a woman student wrote in her diary "I love the library". Have readers become so cynical about HE that they find it astonishing that a student should acquire love of reading and learning? Alas if this is so, and that we cannot anticipate such response from all students!

RADICAL CHANGE

The theme of change continues in our final paper by **Reg Dennick** and **Kate Exley**, who describe the major changes in the approach of the General Medical Council to the teaching of would-be doctors.

A series of case studies of new approaches to teaching medical students is both encouraging to those of us who may have to consult these future doctors one day, and also may inspire teachers in other fields to adapt some clever ideas.

SEDA'S BIRTHDAY

As we go to press with this issue, celebrations are under way to mark the fifth anniversary of the founding of the Staff and Educational Development Association. It was formed in 1993 through a merger between SCED (Standing Conference on Educational Development) and the Staff Development Group of SRHE (Society for Research into HE).

For the most up-to-date information on all SEDA's activities, IT cognoscenti can visit SEDA's web-site: **http://www.seda.demon.co.uk**

SEDA's Teacher Accreditation scheme continues to thrive. Latest figures show 44 programmes recognised under the full scheme, plus 2 variants, and 2 programmes recognised under the associate scheme. Nearly 1000 teachers are now accredited or on a recognised course of study. Amazing.

Do enjoy this issue. It's a good read.

Elizabeth Mapstone

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

AND

LEARNING TO LEARN

Graham Walton and _Catherine Edwards_ explain what the IMPEL2 eLib Project is, and why its finding are important for all HE teachers, in the light of Dearing's recommendations that HE develop the key skills of use of information technology and learning how to learn.

The electronic library is expected to be the resource of the future, and yet HE institutions in the UK do not yet appear to have recognized the need to invest in this future.

Graham Walton is Faculty Librarian (Health, Social Work and Education) at the University of Northumbria at Newcastle(UNN). He is also Co-Director of the IMPEL2 project

DEARING RECOMMENDS

The recent Dearing Report (formally, *The Report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education*, 1997) has generated a great deal of discussion amongst various stakeholders in higher education - and the debate has not been restricted to whether students should contribute towards their tuition fees. The Report clarifies the 'new compact' between HE, society and taxpayers, students and graduates, HE institutions and staff, employers and students' families, and outlines the benefits to all these groups of the kind of HE planned for the UK over the coming 20 years. The vision of the *'learning society'* which guided the inquiry includes acknowledgement of HE's place in a knowledge-based economy.

Dearing also develops the idea of a '*programme specification*' with intended outcomes under four main headings:

- The knowledge and understanding a student will be expected to have upon completion of a course.
- Key skills: communication, numeracy, the use of information technology and learning how to learn.
- Cognitive skills.
- Subject specific skills.

(Dearing Report, recommendation 21)

Catherine Edwards is the IMPEL2 Project Co-Ordinator. She is a qualified librarian who works as Research Associate in the Department of Information and Library Management at the University of Northumbria at Newcastle.

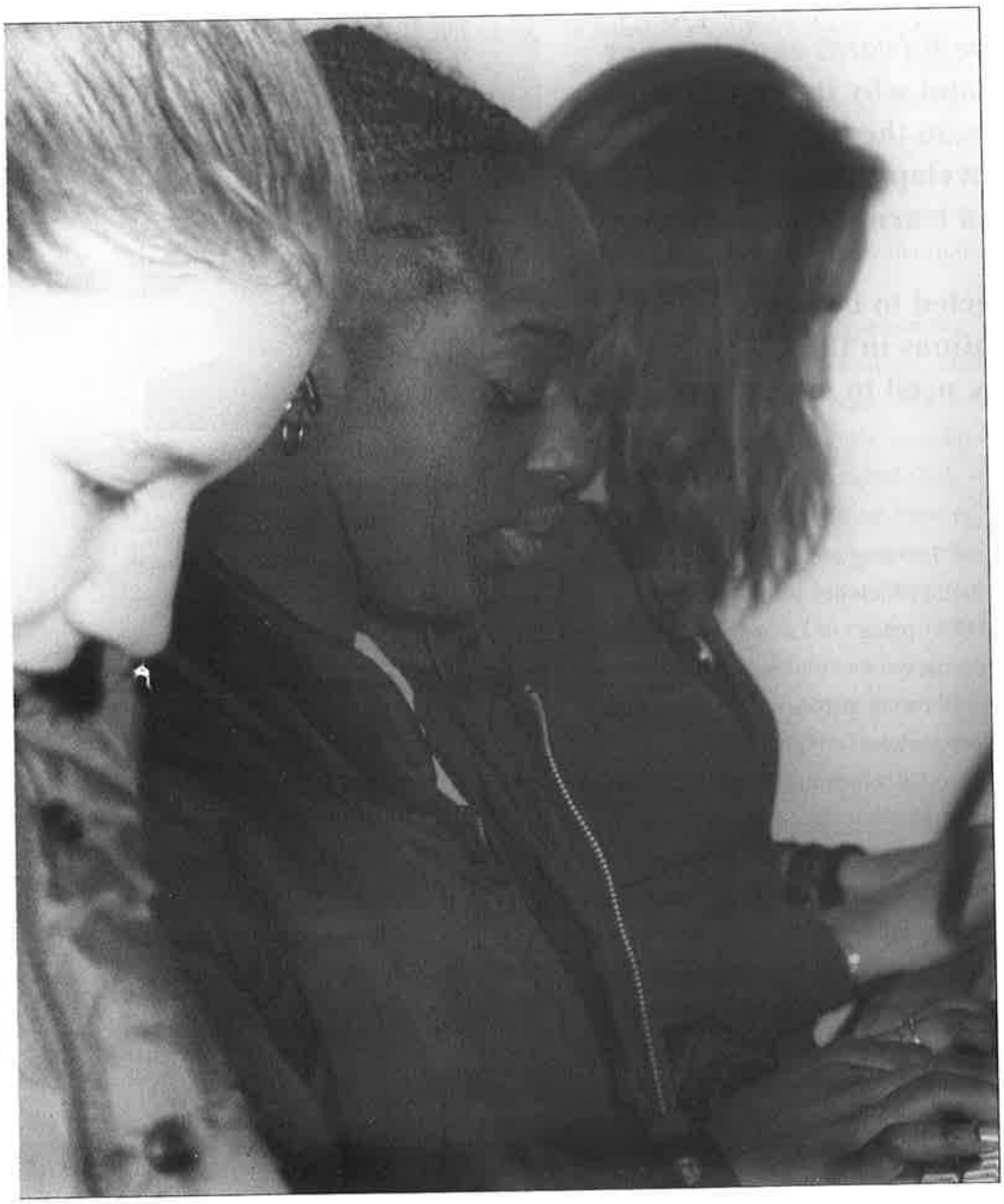
Identification of these four key skills has major implications if universities are effectively to ensure all students can demonstrate all skills.

This article aims to investigate the key skills of using information technology and learning to learn. This analysis will be informed by data from the IMPEL2 eLib project. In 1994 central government allocated £15 million funding to support the development of the electronic library, as a direct result of the Follett (1993) report into future of HE libraries. The eLib programme was set up to 'engage the HE community in developing and shaping the implementation of the electronic library'.

IMPEL2

As one of eLib's Supporting Studies, IMPEL2 (or IMpact on People of Electronic Libraries) has been investigating the social, organisational and cultural issues which surround electronic library development in HE institutions. The study links five complementary approaches, focusing on:

- Library and related support staff
- Academic staff users
- Implications for Library and Information Services (LIS) of Resource-Based Learning (RBL) policies
- Staff training and development for LIS staff
- Evaluation of eLib's Netskills and EduLib projects



Case studies have been conducted in 24 varied HE institutions and resulted in 300 in-depth interviews. This 'overview' approach is untypical of most eLib projects which have defined end-products or training programmes. IMPEL2 is in a position to sound out the views, concerns and perceptions of the people working at all levels about a range of issues, including the key skills of using information technology and learning how to learn.

USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Library and Information Services (LIS) staff have noted with relief that use of information technology (IT) is ranked as a 'key' skill. LIS staff are no doubt relieved that this is now official, having been (along with colleagues in other central service departments) at the cutting edge of IT development over recent years and grappling with the instructional demands which accompany it. LIS staff may also be relieved at Dearing's confirmation of the importance of *'overarching communications and information strategies'* (Dearing Report, recommendation 41).

The two themes that have emerged from IMPEL2 data on the use information technology are the lack of recognition and the need for collaboration.

Lack of recognition:

IMPEL2 findings reflect the frustration experienced by many LIS at

the failure at institutional level to address adequately the question of IT skills for students and staff. Frustrations expressed have centred on:

'The university is accepting students who lack the most fundamental skills to survive in the academic environment of 1996. Now, if they were coming in and you suspected that their English was very poor, a) you would test it and b) if it is found deficient you would require that they take a language course, but this [IT skills] is really just as important and what we are saying is this is a strategic issue for the university....how are you going to pick it up?' (University librarian)

'No-one has made any allowance for IT, is the bottom line. They [teaching departments] demand it, they depend on it, but they have made no actual allowances for running it.' (Computing Centre staff member)

'...for a long time I felt there was a problem with what I'd describe as a vacuum, next to the library operation.' (University librarian)

'Presumably the university is trying to produce a marketable product which has to be students with IT skills. You know when you go into the workplace, what's wanted, IT skills. And it is not our responsibility to produce it. (Subject librarian)

'So basically, it's chaos. The students are suffering. A lot of students are just not taught IT. And the User Support people have to pick it all up. It's worse now because there's fewer of them, to help them.' (Ex-Head of Computing)

- Apparent lip-service paid in institutional documentation, to the provision of IT skills on campus.
- Apparent failure at highest levels to fully understand that IT skills are now fundamental to the learning, teaching and research experience.
- Budget cuts which target central services such as Computing Centres and LIS, which are then rendered incapable of providing adequate programmes.

No Information Strategy can ensure that IT skills are given a higher profile, but certainly the problem does need to be addressed first at that level.

The problem of providing basic IT skills (e.g. word-processing, spreadsheet, e-mail) has become acute in a number of institutions, particularly where their computing departments have been severely underfunded or have lost cohesion as computing itself has become distributed. Good information handling skills depend on a certain level of IT competence; there is concern that students (particularly undergraduates) are genuinely disadvantaged by lack of the basic skills, and that too often the issue is not taken up and properly tackled.

Collaboration:

As long as institutional initiatives, commitment and resources fail to match the demands imposed by IT, successful collaborative efforts will inevitably be frustrated. IT cannot be seen in isolation as it pervades most educational activities. Collaboration between teaching, LIS, computing and learning development staff must happen if an IT culture is to grow. This may mean service departments having the high visibility and professionalism demonstrated in one particular IMPEL2 site:

'So the approach is to go to them [academic departments] and to give them a sweetener, to offer them something that we know they need, to do it very well and on the back of that to say, well by the way, do you want to discuss a, b or c and ...over a period of time, integrate it.....We know that we have the skills and we know the departments aren't in a position to provide the teaching.' (Site librarian)

It is interesting that LIS staff often report that they must adopt this 'softly, softly' approach with academic departments. Teaching staff demonstrate the whole spectrum of attitudes towards IT, its role in teaching and research and the acquisition of necessary skills, from full commitment to scepticism.

'I don't know whether there's a certain reticence in some departments

'It's vital for us that we get into departments with quality teaching programmes and integrate ourselves into departmental modules.' (Site librarian)

'You know, if it's a matter of teaching the use of Chem Abs on-line or any other database on-line, we're in no doubt that's our responsibility.' (Library Director)

'We know the departments aren't in a position to provide the teaching, we know that we have the skills.' (Site librarian)

'There is no doubt that teaching students how to access Niss, how to access on-line databases, how to access locally held CD-ROM databases, is quite fairly a function that should be taught by the Library to students en-masse.' (Library computing officer)

to accept that we [LIS] can offer useful things.' (Subject librarian)

A Head of School of Management was reported to consider IT skills low-level and clerical:

'His attitude is that MBAs are not interested in databases; they will have minions who will do that sort of work for them and they don't need to learn those sorts of skills.' (Subject librarian)

Another subject librarian commented:

'There are a whole lot of tutors who either don't think it's necessary or are perhaps doing it themselves and we don't really know what's going on out there.'

The question of teaching staff responsibility for IT skills is controversial. Success may depend on the level of enthusiasm of individual tutors. LIS and computing staff know that they possess the necessary skills and knowledge and often feel unhappy about the prospect of responsibility resting with tutors whose skill levels vary and who may experience difficulty in keeping up to speed with developments. The following two comments were made by User Support staff in the same LIS and illustrate a divergence of views:

'We've [LIS] never done any IT training for students and I still don't think we should - that's the academics' responsibility. It's not a separate subject. It's subject-based and it should be taught by lecturers.'

'I don't think departments can do that as well as efficiently teach their subjects - they are two separate things.'

'There's going to be a big demand on our teaching skills and none of us are trained teachers.. It's not something you're taught at library school.' (Subject librarian)

'We have to do teaching and we are not teachers.... Just occasionally it causes problems. I set an assignment last year which turned out to be too complicated for them... I know I will get an evaluation sheet saying what a load of rubbish. And I think, well I did my best, I am not a teacher' (Subject librarian)

'I feel very daunted about all the information skills courses that I'm going to do, all the library induction tours.' (Subject librarian)

'Lecturing staff aren't the most appropriate staff to be providing these information skills.' (User Service Manager)

'I think the danger with the electronic services is that academics get out of touch with what we're doing.' (Subject librarian)

'A lot of (academic staff) would now freely admit that they lack the skills in IT and they don't feel that they're sort of computerate to the stage where they feel comfortable.' (Computing director)

'We're setting up the information skills sessions with them.. I think they do get out of touch quite quickly with what's happening if they're not particularly IT oriented.' (Subject librarian)

It is actually uphill work to present to the tutors about getting them to buy CDs, getting them to tell students to use it.' (Qualified librarian)

They'll timetable me in, yes. We shall see at exam time how effective that's been this year. They've actually been set specific problems where they have to use the university network to connect to CD-ROMs.' (Information specialist)

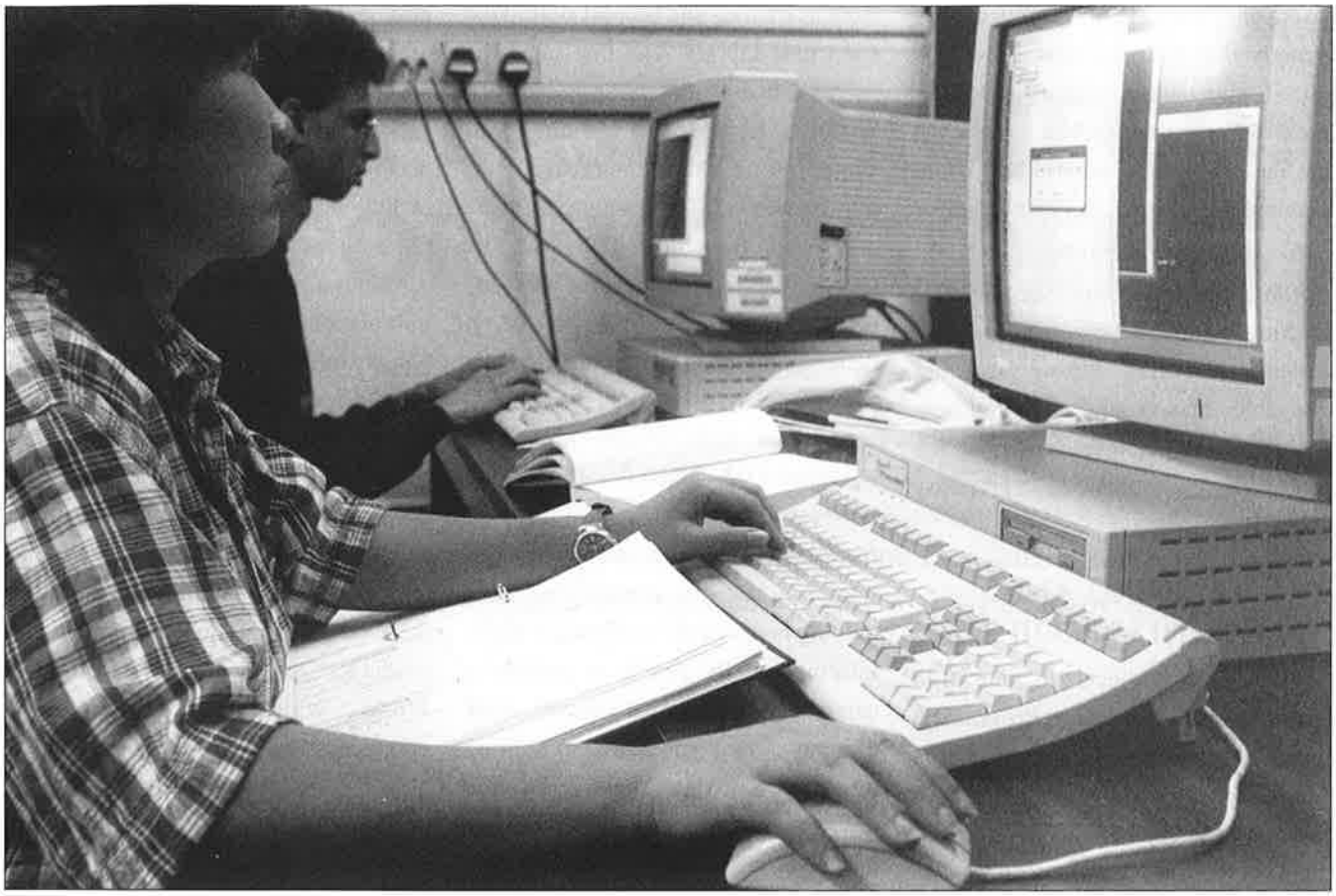
It was excellent to get involved in a module.... We were given three slots - on information sources and putting together search strategies and researching databases. In three hours you can cover so much.' (Subject librarian)

LEARNING TO LEARN

There are many components of the tool box students need to be effective learners. This section will concentrate on the information skills needed for students to be information self-reliant. Students have to be able to identify when they have an information need. The need has to be developed and refined so the student has a clear and manageable understanding. Appropriate information sources have to be established and then the student has to be able to retrieve this information. The final process revolves around the evaluation and internalising of this information.

IMPEL2 data illuminates concerns from librarians about the teaching role that this entails. It has also some highlighted some very pragmatic concerns from them.

Professional librarians in most universities have some level of involvement in teaching information skills. Some librarians see it as an essential part of their work:



Some professional librarians perceived themselves as the most appropriate people to deliver the teaching. They had the information skills and technical skills that were needed to teach students how to use electronic information. Many librarians were working in posts where there was an increasing expectation that they would have teaching responsibilities. Without consciously seeking a teaching role they had found that delivering information skills programmes was part of their remit. There appeared to be a significant lack of confidence in librarians that they would be effective in this new teaching role.

In a similar fashion to academics teaching IT skills, librarians also saw academics as inappropriate for delivering information skills. The academic's teaching skills were not questioned but there were doubts expressed about their information skills.

This reluctance about involving academic staff has resulted in most cases in information skills being the sole responsibility of the Library for the content, mode and delivery. Various good practices were present at IMPEL2 sites. A Subject Librarian described her ideal as 'a set programme of graduated instruction, varying according to subject needs and embedded into the curriculum.' There are many examples where such an ideal has been at least in part achieved:

It is clear that this level of collaboration relies on a great deal of hard work in building and sustaining good relations with departments. There were some disappointing stories where LIS staff had failed to make such an impact.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

In the interviews it emerged that various pragmatic issues were engaging librarians. These included the following:

Timeliness:

. An important success factor was the timeliness of the delivery. If the teaching did not coincide with needs of students the teaching suffered. To a large extent library staff had to be content with the teaching slots allocated by academics. They had no control over when teaching should be ideally delivered.

Accommodation:

Librarians also had to be prepared to teach a range of group sizes varying from one-to-one up to 300 students at one time. The level and standard of accommodation available for this appeared to be irrelevant. Some libraries had their own teaching suite consisting of 20 networked high spec PCs. Even these had their limitations when teaching database searching to large groups.

Subject based vs general:

A further preoccupation was whether information skill should be subject

based or general. Some argued very strongly that their teaching should be geared towards the students' academic discipline or current project. Others felt that the skills were general and could therefore be delivered to mixed groups.

Unstimulating:

Librarians were conscious that their teaching could be perceived by the students as being boring and not enjoyable. This attitude coloured how they approached their teaching role. The issue of self-fulfilling prophesy emerges.

TRAINING AND AWARENESS PROJECTS

When the projects in the eLib T*raining and Awareness Programme* areas are examined, IT and the information skills for learning how to learn and the role of the librarian all come through as being central. *The Training and Awareness Programme*, as the title indicates, is not about delivering electronic information, but is more concerned about skills needed to make effective use of electronic information.

One of the highest profile training and awareness projects is **EduLib** (URL http://www.hull.ac.uk/edulib), a collaboration between the University of Hull, the University of Abertay Dundee and SEDA. The aim is to give EduLib participants the networked information skills and the teaching skills needed to work as training and support staff in the Electronic Library. The first stage has been to identify the skills needed for librarians' teaching and learning roles. Training packages related to information skills teaching will be developed from this analysis. The cascade method will be used whereby participants will be expected to pass on their newly acquired skills to their colleagues.

Another high profile project is **Netskills** (URL http:www.netskills.ac.uk) based at the University of Newcastle. Its remit is wider than EduLib in that it is concerned with the training needs of all users of electronic information. Its aim is to provide a comprehensive national network skills training programme aimed at shifting the culture within higher education towards awareness and widespread use of networked information resources. Library staff will be provided with materials and short courses to support then in training the users. This complements EduLib where the priority is about giving library staff the androgogic skills to develop fully their role as network trainers.

The other training and awareness eLib projects have some relationship with information skills but not at the same level as EduLib and Netskills. **TAPin** (Training and Awareness Programme in networks) (URL http:www.uce.ac.uk/tapin) is a collaborative project based on a consortium of six universities in the Western Midlands part of the UK. The information skills focus will be when librarians in each of the six universities will be trained in the use and transfer of networked information resources. The trained librarians will then transfer these skills and resources to academic staff.

Netlinks is being developed from the University of Sheffield (URL http://netways.shef.ac.uk). The purpose of this project is to enable library professionals to acquire the knowledge and skills to successfully develop networked learner support. These will include teaching the networked learner the skills they need.

A fascinating project on conveying information skills is being developed at Kings College. called **CINE** (Cartoon images for Network Education) (URL http://www.kcl.ac.uk/projects/cine/top.htm). This project will explore the potential of visual and animated media as a supplement or as an alternative to text. Animation modules covering the following information skills will be produced: text searching techniques, World Wide Web and Z39.50 operations.

CONCLUSION

Since the IMPEL2 project commenced, the distinctions between information skills and information technology teaching have continued to blur. The Dearing report highlighted the importance of these skills in a knowledge-based economy. The IMPEL2 findings and the outcomes from other eLib projects should ensure more effective information teaching. The major restricting factor will be the continuing reduction in the unit of resource. If UK universities accept the recommendation concerning key skills, they will have to allocate appropriate resources to the teaching of these skills. IMPEL2 findings indicate that universities have to have a major re-think about how this can be achieved.

Website Addresses

(full details in text)

IMPEL2 (URL http://ilm.unn.ac.uk/impel)
EduLib (URL http://www.hull.ac.uk/edulib)
Netskills (URL http:www.netskills.ac.uk)
TAPin (URL http:www.uce.ac.uk/tapin)
Netlinks (URL http://netways.shef.ac.uk)
CINE (URL http://www.kcl.ac.uk/projects/cine/top.htm).

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Dearing, Sir Ron (1997). Higher Education in the learning society: The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education.London: HMSO.

Follett, Sir Brian (1993). Report of the Joint Funding Councils' Libraries Review Group. Bristol: HEFCE.

WORK-BASED PROJECTS: SUPPORTING STUDENTS

In the wake of Dearing's recommendations that students be given opportunities to benefit from work experience, *Jenny Rowley* outlines the special problems to be borne in mind when helping students carry out work-based projects.

VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

Students may engage in individual work-based projects in a wide range of courses and work environments. From my own experience over many years in business and management studies, and information management, both as external examiner and as internal supervisor and assessor, I will identify the difficulties students frequently experience with work-based projects. I will suggest ways in which supervisors and assessors can support students in resolving such difficulties and, if necessary, accommodate the consequences of these issues during the assessment process.

Consideration of work-based projects is particularly apposite at this time in the wake of the Dearing Report, which recommends that all institutions should, over the medium term, identify opportunities to increase the extent to which programmes help students to become familiar with work, and help them to reflect on such experience.

HAZARDS INHERENT IN SUCH PROJECTS

With increasing vocational emphasis in HE, and large numbers of part-time students, many students each year attempt to conduct a work-based project as part of their undergraduate, postgraduate or doctoral studies. Students who are already in employment often welcome the opportunity to integrate study and work, and may view this as an opportunity to contain the amount of academic work that they need to do, whilst a work-based project is also an opportunity to make a impact which may lead to new career opportunities in their workplace.

Students should however be alerted to the hazards of work-based projects.

1. Changing Agendas

A project that extends over a year or more is very subject to changes in the work place, including shifting objectives and missions, re-structuring, changes in personnel, and perhaps most significantly, changes in the role of the student and therefore the people and sources to which they have access. The

impact of these changes depends significantly on their nature and the stage of the project at which they occur.

2. Confidentiality

The project will be constructed by the information that organisational policy, or individual inclinations allow to be disclosed. Most organisations have some issues and areas in which they are prepared to be open, either because they are confident of good practice that will reflect well on them, or because such issues are not associated with their competitive edge. Similarly, individuals will have their own realities and will impose these in both the interview situation and in other data that they may tender.

Books and research methods warn about objectivity and subjectivity, but there are also confidentiality and power to consider. Students need to be very skilful to negotiate some of these issues.

3. Access to Resources and People

When a project works well, it may offer the student access to people and sources that would otherwise be beyond their remit, offering the student a different perspective on an organisation. However, at the start of a project, unless the student has a 'project champion' who can facilitate access to appropriate sources, this may be a significant issue.

4. Establishing links with the Literature

Masters level projects and doctoral dissertations need to demonstrate the contribution that the project has made to knowledge. Undergraduate projects should, at the very least, demonstrate that the student can apply the knowledge they have acquired during their studies to work situations. Although the nature of the integration of work and knowledge differs in these two circumstances, it is necessary in both. Many students experience difficulty in moving from an internal report style, to the style of a dissertation, and the creation of an effective link between a literature review and the practical issue to be investigated is a real challenge.

5. Writing for Two Audiences

Clearly the student is required to produce a dissertation. If the employer has made time available for the project, s/he may also want a report, in a style that offers clear recommendations for action. Students often need support in differentiating between these two activities, and in the production of different but interlinked documents in a time-efficient manner. Guidance will need to start with the framing of distinct objectives for the two projects and an understanding of how and when data collected for one purpose can be interpreted and used for the other.

SUPERVISOR'S ROLE

Each of the above problems will feature to a greater or smaller extent within specific projects and it is important to remember that each student's experience is different, precisely because in this context students are engaged in student-centred and independent learning.

There is a significant literature on the supervisor's role in managing research projects, and many of the principles identified in that literature are equally applicable in this context. Significantly, the relationship between the student and the supervisor, and the mutual understanding of each other's roles, provide a platform from which the difficulties that may occur with work-based projects can be addressed.

To explore this issue further, it is profitable to go through the steps in the research process:

Identifying a Topic

Choosing the topic is all important. Four criteria must be satisfied in respect of a work-based project, whether it be at undergraduate, postgraduate or Masters level. The project must be:

- *Related to the literature.* Often a student will bring a work-based project or issue which could be illuminated with reference to a variety of different literatures on say, culture, quality, marketing, or the service experience. Conversion of this topic into a research question may resolve the issue of which literature, but nevertheless, many students will need explicit direction at the commencement of their studies.
- *Feasible in the work environment.* This involves reflection on access to appropriate data sources and individuals and time and scheduling constraints.
- Offer an appropriate opportunity to develop and experiment with *research methodological skills.*
- *Be capable of being changed* to a different type of project, such as a survey or a literature based project, if the initial proposal proves not to be feasible.

Managing the Process

All students need support during the process of their research project. They need guidance and feedback on their progress and encouragement when things are difficult. Changing environments may mean that a student conducting a work-based project needs additional support in the identification of alternative projects which use the work that the student has already done.

On occasions, especially with, say, a doctoral project extending over some years, it may be necessary to abandon the first project and commence a second project in a related field. The student will view this as an irretrievable disaster, and will need assistance in integrating learning from the first project into the new plan.

In a less extreme circumstance,

where say, the student has more limited access to sources than was originally envisaged it may be possible to revise the research questions slightly and use another approach to collect revised data. Alternatively, a reflection section in the dissertation, which identifies and reflects on the problem with the original plans, can demonstrate the student's awareness of the complexities of the research process and may be used to mitigate a piece of work that otherwise would not reflect the student's abilities.

Writing Up

Issues of sensitivity, confidentiality and audience are likely to loom large in the context of writing up. Students need support in understanding how these issues could be approached differently in the context of a dissertation and an internal report

Another primary difference between these two documents lies in the area of the recommendations. In an internal report, recommendations are for action, such as the implementation of a new system, or a specific human resource strategy. In a dissertation, recommendations relate to the outcome of the project in relation to existing work in the field as exemplified in the literature. Depending on the level for which the dissertation is written they may propose a model, identify characteristics of good practices or suggest areas for future research in other contexts. This different approach to recommendations reflects the different types of objectives that would frame these two different types of projects at their beginning.

CONCLUSION

Work-based projects pose some unique problems for students, supervisors and assessors. These can be grouped into those arising from: changing agendas and environment, confidentiality, access, links to existing work, and dealing with two audiences. Successful outcomes require that all parties are aware of these potential hazards and that students are offered appropriate support in negotiating these should this be necessary.

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"TELL ME HOW TO GET A FIRST..."

Katrina Miller looks at the misconceptions underlying her student's plea to be shown "how to get a First" - and explores the real meaning of scholarly education. She argues that many tutors are not aware of their own implicit assumptions either.

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" TELL ME HOW TO GET A FIRST AND I'LL DO IT! "

Thus did one anxious student express his need to achieve at this newly chosen academic game. His words show how little he understood of what it is to be academic, the values and practices of the university, what it means to be scholarly and to win at the academic game.

We had provided what we regarded as a sound introduction to the ways of the Faculty in a 'study skills' module about academic writing, using the library and learning support and had explored what was involved in university teaching. Yet the student clearly had not understood something crucial about HE which goes beyond being told what to do and doing it well.

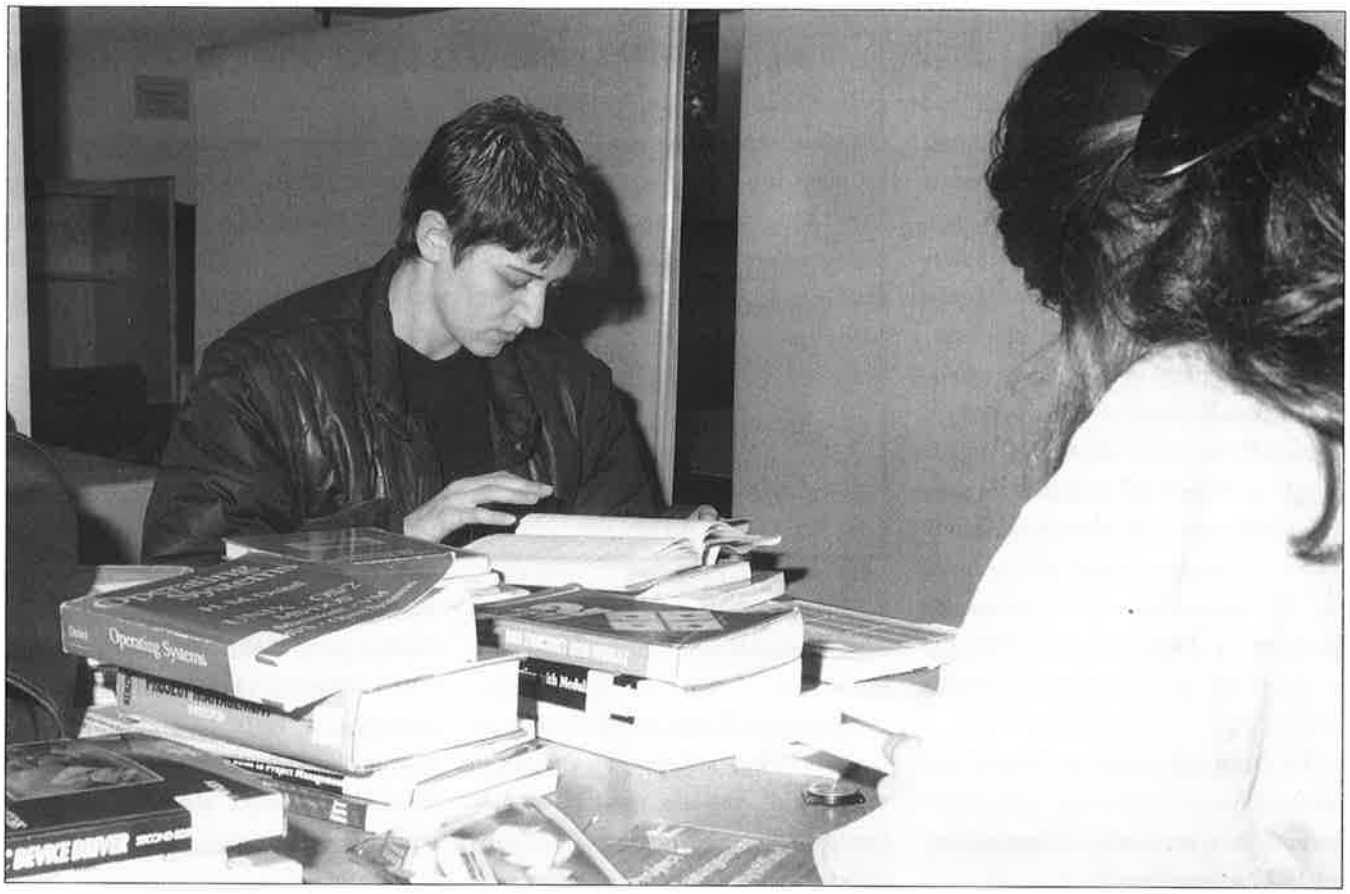
No-one teaching in HE these days can be unaware of developments in teaching and learning and the Faculty of Education at Brighton University is no exception. We are a large teacher education provider of both initial and post-experience courses and, like other 'polyversities', are introducing an ever widening range of student into the practices of HE. These "academic practices" are what we do in order to teach, research and learn. We read, write, talk, listen, debate, research, model, think. We hold certain beliefs and values which influence our epistemological models, pedagogic practices and the institution's structures and systems. Like other HE institutions we have responded to financial constraint by modularisation, reducing student contact time and increasingly expecting a high level of independent study. We therefore commit considerable resource to student induction. But when a student can make a comment like this, it means something is missing.

In a recent research project exploring the nature of HE teaching and learning on this part-time post-experience first degree course, I was struck by the limitations of our 'study skills' module and the dominant mechanistic view of academic practices. I wanted to understand epistemological and pedagogical practices at a theoretical level. It seemed to me that there is more going on than the mechanics of writing, reading, talking and listening and if, as recent research has shown, "explicitness" is the prime factor affecting facilitation of HE success, (Harrop & Douglas, 1996), then these insights could progress practices beyond the limitations of the mechanistic.

Comments from tutors, both formal and informal, frequently express concerns at students' lack of understanding, or misunderstanding, of academic practices and the discourse of the university. These practices are manifested in course documentation, structures and procedures, inherent in the relationship between tutor and student and indeed in the culture and ideology of the university itself.

Many students do not seem to engage easily in their academic studies. Tutors find difficulty in teaching students coming to academic study with professional expertise and experience. Both tutors and students have expectations and perceptions of academic study and of the practices of the university, perhaps of its very function, that are somewhat tangential to those of the institution itself.

For example, distribution of a



reading list elicited the question, "*Do we have to read all this?*"; misconceptions of HE are perhaps evidenced in the demand, "*Tell me what to do to get a first and I'll do it!*"; anxiety about assignment writing is presented as, *"I'm not sure if I'm on the right track here. Is this what you want?"*; while unhappy tutor perception is manifested in the comment, *"The trouble with these students is that basically, they're thick."*

Meanwhile the institution attempts development of teaching and learning practices to support more independent, non-contact learning and creates staff development programmes in new ways of less resource intensive course delivery and assessment.

ACADEMIC PRACTICES AS SOCIAL

Because academic practices are essentially linguistic/discursive, using word signs both written and spoken, I applied a theoretical model emerging currently in academic debates where literacy and numeracy are being seen as social practices. Whereas post-war literacy theory had it as an individualistic technicist collection of decontextualised and functional skills, the last ten years have seen a widening of this fundamentalist definition to one which names social, ideological and cultural aspects of, "literacy practices". The hegemonic technicist model of literacy and numeracy has been described as "autonomous" (Street, 1995). In contrast, Street and Baker, amongst others, have developed a cultural or "ideological" model. In this, literacies and numeracies are defined as social practices and therefore culturally and ideologically embedded with significance placed on relations of power (Baker et al, 1996). I am suggesting that a social practice model of academic practice might be useful in gaining theoretical understanding of academic practices and effectively progress teaching and learning. This research has identified certain characteristics of the two models shown in the box over the page.

I have used these descriptors to explore, through interview data, student and tutor understandings of academic discourse and practice.

TECHNICIST OR SOCIAL?

The tutors seemed to hold a view of students in deficit at least in terms of understanding the canon of accepted knowledge and in need of being up-dated in their professional understanding. Tutors see themselves as the conduit through which legitimated knowledge is channelled. One said of students, *"They lack the knowledge on which to do the conceptual thinking"*, and another spoke of filling *"holes, dips and gaps in students' understanding"*.

The development of students' knowledge and understanding was clearly focused on students' own

professional practice rather than the exploration of new knowledge. Tutors valued "evaluation", " challenging'" and "conjecture" but within accepted ways of knowing rather than in critique of those models.

In trying to define "academic", tutors matched a technicist model of social practice. One described "academic" as:

"A formal way of looking at others' thinking and ideas ... I suppose to a large extent it's a group of people largely in HE whose role it is to write about ideas and reflection on practice."

Rather worryingly, another said,

" I'm not sure what I think academic means ... I think it's an ability to accommodate and assimilate complex ideas .."

This lack of understanding of the nature of our practices is a concern. At least one tutor was aware of the teaching and learning implications:

"There are ways of doing things and we're not very good at sharing them. We actually assume that they (the students) know what we mean when we say write an essay or whatever ...We're very kind of up there .. with students who've no experience of this kind of study."

This is an expression of the **technicist** model with its hierarchical power relations, structures and practices that students and tutors have to contend with in the university culture.

Students come to the university with the notion that there is an accepted body of theoretical knowledge about which they need to learn. Their own professional expertise and understanding is "a bit down there", yet at the same time, the theoretical is in some way limited. Thus students say:

" I've got part of the picture. I need the other half to make sense."

"Underpinning knowledge is necessary .. I had no idea there was so much theory."

"Maybe at the end I could write a book, but that's not going to be very useful is it?"

Students regard themselves as in deficit. Tutors are seen as experts in their field, yet also not up-to-date because they are seen as academic rather than professional practitioners.

TECHNICIST LANGUAGE

The language used in course documentation reflects an implicit ideology which frames the current discourse as technicist. Thus, there are opportunities *"to enhance and develop...knowledge, skills and understanding"* rather than to challenge and interrogate a dominant epistemological model. There are modules which *" introduce students to some of the essential requirements (of the subject) ... in order to enhance their professional performance"*, and which, "develop the competence, confidence and understanding necessary". There is a noticeable lack of such concepts as critique, challenge or problematizing.

There is also a singularity rather than pluralism or multiplicity of epistemologies here; 'theory' is used rather than 'theories', 'curriculum' preferred over 'curricula'. There is no explicit reference to ideology or to values; context is almost universally current professional practice; reading lists contain more references to statutory texts and official documentation than to conflicting theoretical or more academic work. It would be interesting to see whether this was so in other subjects. It may be a particular feature of Education courses currently.

CONCEPTS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Tutors perceived the students as expecting a transmission, didactic, lecture mode of teaching in the university, although in pedagogical terms, students' professional experience was frequently exploited in active and interactive teaching and learning strategies. One spoke, for example, of the effectiveness of active experiential learning:

" You can talk 'til you're blue in the face ... It's not 'til you actually make them use it and on more than one occasion that some of them actually see its relevance."

Assessment is used to encourage reflection on professional performance and application of fresh understanding:

"We try to give them an assessment task that will be of practical use, but will

TWO CULTURAL MODELS OF LITERACY/NUMERACY

Technicist	**Social**
psychological	cultural
cognitive	holistic
value-free	value-laden
hierarchical	democratic
accepted canon of knowledge	multiple ways of knowing
conventions	multiple practices
ahistoric	context specific
relations of power denied	power relations explicit
pathologises student	valorises learners
reflective	critical

also ensure that they reflect upon their practice so they'll be better practitioners and understand why they are."

This dominant model of reflective practitioner sits comfortably within a technicist model of academic practice and may compound tensions between the aims of scholarship and utilitarian demands of 'graduateness'.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

A feature of the mature, part-time, professionally-experienced student seems to be the significance of personal as well as professional motivation. This is a critical area in terms of students' engagement with academic practices and the discourse of the university.

On one level, the personal is important to these mature professional students and tied up with personal identity in a way which is different from the traditional undergraduate; on another level there is something to be said about the oppressive and puritanical power of the academic or intellectual way of knowing which denies the affective and pleasure arising from intellectual activity.

Teaching strategies were a feature articulated by the students themselves as a crucial aspect of their engagement with the practices of the university and their own learning. They talked about an interactive teaching and learning mode, praising the tutor, *"willing to listen and take your ideas on board", "who makes you feel you've got something to offer"* and, *"where learning goes both ways"*. Condemnation was clear for the workshop where *"you don't open your mouth if you're going to get shut down"* and, *"as soon as there's a discussion coming up you're told you're deviating from my (the tutor's) plan"*.

The students all agreed that optimisation of their taught learning opportunities at the university was wholly dependent on the teaching style of the tutor. They were all aware that their, "academic skills" would develop; they would learn to write "a decent essay", move from "I hate reading" to being able to use a variety of texts purposefully and develop self confidence and articulacy. Again, their module tutors were perceived as having a strong role to play in this development.

'MUCH REMAINS IMPLICIT'

In terms of pedagogy, much remains implicit in course documentation, so that teaching and learning strategies are listed rather than any articulation of intellectual or educational vision made explicit. Teaching and learning strategies are headed by "lectures" followed by "discussion", "seminars" or "practical workshops". There is a discrepancy between the language of official documentation and that used by the same tutors to orally describe their practices on the ground. This may say something about tutor perceptions of the academic nature of the institution. Such language institutionalises social, pedagogical and epistemological models as well as power structures.

In course documentation, there is further evidence of its technicist nature in what one tutor described as the "awful academic speak" that is used to maintain the social hierarchies amongst the academic tribe. One student wrote of a course document:

"The message that the text is trying to convey is relatively simple .. It's a pity the writer didn't see it the same way."

THINKING AND PLEASURE

One view of the purpose of HE, expressed by a tutor with bemused bewilderment, was both utilitarian and transformative:

"to help people become more challenged and creative thinkers .... about personal development, only in as much as it's useful to society at large .... intellectual personal development which makes people more aware of the possibilities for change for the better in society."

Warming to her theme, the tutor talked of ideas as *"the powerhouse for development"* as well as *"thinking, rational thinking"*. Only one of the tutors interviewed used such ideologically explicit concepts in this context to articulate opinion on the broader issues surrounding the purposes of HE.

The potential for pleasure in intellectual activity manifests itself differently for tutors and students. Tutors expressed real personal concern about the lack of quality time available to talk through ideas with colleagues, "a product of the harshness of the regime". There are important issues here when the pleasure derived from intellectual engagement is threatened in the current climate.

For the students, the opportunities for self -development offered by the university experience were just as important as the professional. There is a positive side to this where,

"My mind is being opened up to looking round the corner."

"I feel excited; I want to read."

and the negative,

"I feel horrible here, vulnerable".

This vulnerability, a personal response to the university culture dominated by the impersonal and academic, provides an opportunity to challenge the oppressive dominance of this academicism, not least from a feminist perspective. Surprisingly, one student wrote in her diary how she "loved " the library and having time and space to immerse herself freely in texts. She

wrote:

"I'm changing .. I want to look at things in more depth .. I want plays, films to say something not just entertain."

TOWARDS THE IDEOLOGICALLY EXPLICIT

It seems that our present academic practices have features that can be described as technicist rather than ideological. There is a canon of accepted ways of knowing, concepts and texts; students are in need of theoretical understanding; tutors and students are in a hierarchical relationship; tutors are academic experts and have academic expertise which they invest in the students; teaching and learning strategies are embedded in these models; transferable study skills have to be developed by the students in order to succeed.

Different and more effective teaching strategies could address multiple ways of knowing, valorise learners, acknowledge the social and cultural embededness of the academic, be ideologically explicit, transformative and interrogative. Whilst we are all attempting to teach better and facilitate student learning through a greater diversity of strategies and models, unless we begin to make what is really important explicit then we can only be partially successful. Pathologising the student and offering technicist solutions may not be the best answer for, as Bourdieu (et al, 1994) put it:

"Every effort to transform the system which is not accompanied by an attempt to transform attitudes towards the system (and conversely) is doomed to failure."

This argument against the technicist nature of current academic practices suggests that unpacking the underlying ideologies that frame our discourse would be a fruitful way of re-modelling, re-framing and re-constructing ' study skills' into more effective introductory provision. The way to a first class degree would then be understood by the noviciate student and s/he would not expect to be led there by the hand.

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RADICAL CHANGES IN MEDICAL TEACHING

Reg Dennick and Kate _Exley_ describe major changes in the approach of the General Medical Council, and give some case studies of new methods of teaching would-be doctors. Inspiration here for many fields.

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Dr Kate Exley is in the Training and Staff Development Unit at the University of Nottingham.

NEED FOR CHANGE

If HE in general is reeling from increased student numbers, inadequate funding, new curricula demands and the introduction of new teaching methods, medical education in particular is undergoing radical and unprecedented change. After over a decade of consultation, the General Medical Council (GMC) produced a set of recommendations which attempted to provide a broad framework for the future of medical education in this country. Problems identified were:

- a factually overloaded curriculum
- excessive lecture-based didactic teaching
- teaching divorced from clinical context
- educational culture of rote and surface learning
- an assessment system focused on factual recall and summative examinations

The GMC recognised that such a system did little to encourage the development of higher level cognitive functions, such as evaluation, synthesis and problem-solving. This teacher-centred culture also engendered an attitude of passivity on the part of medical students who saw themselves merely as recipients of knowledge.

The GMC recommended a series of changes to the curriculum and to medical teaching as shown in the box

Importantly, since it recognised that student assessment largely drives the curriculum and influences any changes to it, the GMC recommended that more progressive schemes of assessment should be implemented. The acquisition of core knowledge, skills and attitudes should be formatively and summatively assessed on a continuous basis rather than via infrequent summative final examinations.

Finally, with rapid changes taking place in medical sciences, the GMC observed that doctors of the future needed to be able to educate themselves to deal with new conceptual discoveries as well as new clinical skills, treatments and technologies. Accordingly they suggest that the shift to student-centredness should lead to an attitude of

GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

scientific method
communication skills
special study modules
inquiry and investigation
competencies
core plus options
reduced factual content
learning objectives
less didactic teaching
integration of pre-clinical and clinical
active learning
student-centred learning
self-directed learning
group work
problem-based learning
balance of knowledge, skills and attitudes

reflective practice which will support doctors of the future and enable them to participate in continuing professional development.

Parts of the above might well be seen as an analysis of the teaching and learning problems in HE in general. In response there has been an explosion of curriculum development in medical schools in the UK.

SEDA has published a volume of case studies entitled *'Innovations in Teaching Medical Sciences'* that focuses on teaching and learning initiatives in undergraduate basic medical science teaching. A new SEDA volume, *'Innovations in teaching clinical medicine and dentistry'* is aimed at clinical or 'patient orientated' teaching. Some case studies from these two volumes are reviewed below to indicate the range of innovative teaching methods currently being developed in medical education.

Card Games for Medical Students

T.E. Roberts and A. M. Heagerty

Games to help students develop the skills required to solve clinical problems have been developed at the University Hospital of South Manchester. Third year students are asked work in teams and to use a system of request cards to help them come to a working diagnostic hypothesis for a respiratory medicine 'patient'.

Seven students work in a group and each group is given the same clinical problem. The problem is a composite of real cases and includes a range of real life 'red herrings'. The clinical problem is presented as a case history, which includes the results of a range of medical investigations, photographs and X-rays. Each team also receives a Work Pack. This contains the aims of the session, information about team working and team roles and student evaluation sheets. During the course the students stay in the same teams and rotate through a range of possible team roles (Belbin) so that they can experience the different ways in which members of a team can contribute to its smooth running and success.

Each group has four cards which they can surrender in exchange for particular kinds of assistance. Each card may only be used once.

1. **Library.** Gives the team limited time to use a resource library

2. **Oracle.** Allows the team to 'consult' a medical expert in any speciality of their choice, to obtain specialist information.

3. **Information.** Can be used to obtain further clinical information or to request additional medical investigations not provided in the problem.

4. **Rescue.** Entitles the team to tutor help if they get stuck.

The teams are encouraged first to brainstorm in order to identify important areas to explore. They then formulate diagnostic possibilities and prioritise the information they need to find so that they can test their hypothesis. The teams then use the cards to collect the data they have highlighted and re-appraise their diagnosis in the light of this new information. Each group reports back to the whole class. Staff tutors work with 2 or 3 groups and they give feedback to the groups about their methods of deductive reasoning and their approach to working together.

Anonymous student feedback at the end of the session has shown that 92 % of the students rated the session as good or very good and attendance at the session has also been very high (95%). Staff are therefore convinced that the students are enthusiastic about this way of learning, but they also believe that it can help students to adopt a team management approach and to organise a logical and hierarchical approach to the care of patients.

Working through the problem

R. W. Koment

Fifty second year students at the University of South Dakota, USA, work in small groups to tackle a series of Clinical Correlation exercises in Microbiology. The exercises are intended to help the students reinforce their understanding of basic scientific principles using a clinical context. The teaching methods used create an opportunity for active and co-operative learning through problem solving and group interaction.

A series of paper exercises, each based on an actual patient, has been developed. The exercises are designed to reveal information at intervals so as to mimic the way in which a doctor would obtain information about a real patient. Students work in groups of 10 with a staff facilitator. The group elects a leader to summarise and record group opinion. The exercises take approximately one hour to work through.

Page one of an exercise contains part of a case history and the results of a physical examination of a patient. e.g. *"Mr A, a 54 y/o native American. who has a history of diabetes mellitus and vascular disease was admitted to hospital with a fever, cough and weight loss"*

Then a number of possible questions to the patient are suggested, e.g. Do you smoke? Do you have any allergies?. The students discuss the case and decide which are the most important questions to ask the patient next. The staff facilitator answers their questions, but does not offer additional information. The facilitator's copy of the exercise includes a "usefulness value" attached to each of the possible questions that the students can ask, ranging from -3 (not

useful at all) to +3 (very useful). It is the facilitator's task to probe why the students consider each request for information to be significant to their understanding of the patient's condition rather than to simply give out answers and scores.

The group then brainstorm a list of possible diagnostic hypotheses (e.g. Could it be TB, HIV, Lung cancer etc.) and decide which medical investigations they need to request to further their understanding (e.g. Blood tests, HIV test etc.). Results are supplied, their significance and value discussed before the next pieces of information can be requested.

This process continues for the subsequent 2 or 3 pages of the exercise, ultimately leading the students into a discussion of possible treatment strategies for the condition which they jointly diagnose. However, diagnosis per se, is not the goal. Rather, it is the discussion and thorough understanding of the microbial mechanisms involved and their resultant effects on an infected patient.

Student satisfaction with these Clinical Correlation exercises is high. They enjoy their education more because they learn within a clinical context. Science Faculty staff and clinical advisors have benefited from improved communication with clinicians, reinforcing the underlying scientific principles and Science staff becoming more aware of clinical applications of their work.

A new approach to childhood development examination teaching

Drs D. Nathan, A. Glaser & M. Blair

An important objective of child health learning is the ability to assess the developmental progress of a child. This has traditionally been taught via lectures using slides and videotape. This case

study describes a method for teaching large numbers of medical students about child development using a live interactive video technique.

An 80-seat lecture theatre is equipped with two large TV monitors linked to a video camera and two-way sound relay in an adjacent 'child-friendly' area. Here children are examined by two students who are in communication with those in the lecture theatre. The lecture theatre students use the standard Denver development chart to interpret the behaviour of the child on the TV monitor. However they are able to communicate via a hand-held microphone with the two students and to ask them to encourage the child to perform specific actions such as hopping or drawing a circle or square. A teacher in the lecture theatre facilitates student learning by questioning and prompting. The process is repeated with pairs of volunteer students. Students are split into a number of smaller groups and are primed to solve several developmental problems.

This form of teaching has been very highly rated by both students and participating staff alike. It is active learning in small groups involving well focused problem solving. It clearly has application to a number of other clinical areas involving the observation of patient behaviour and also doctor-patient interactions.

Patients as partners: Involving patients as teachers in medical education

Dr Diana Kelly & Dr Geoff Wykurz

This is a community-based experiential learning programme in which students are linked with a 'patient-partner' in order to learn about their experiences and perspectives on their health and the different factors affecting it. It is student-centred and patient orientated.

Following two introductory lectures students meet with their tutors for a briefing session during which they are encouraged to reflect on the factors that influence their own health as well as their patient partners. Patient partners also have a briefing session where they are asked how they would like to share their health care experiences, what future doctors should know and how they can contribute towards their learning.

Students and patient partners meet and work together for two and a half days followed by at least three more meetings, during which they may meet other people recommended by the patient partner in their local community. Students are encouraged to reflect on their experiences by means of a diary and regular tutorials. Finally, students give poster presentations at a meeting with patient partners followed by a general discussion. Posters are assessed by the tutor along with an essay.

Overall the scheme was well received by students, patient partners and tutors. Students highly rated the opportunity to work with patients in the community and to gain direct experience of the environmental and social factors influencing health care. Patient partners were pleased to be able to contribute towards the education of future doctors and to be able to give them direct experience of life in their communities.

BOOKS

WEARING TROUSERS?

OU Men:-Work Through Lifelong Learning

Patricia Lunneborg
Lutterworth (1997) £14.99
ISBN 0 7188 2972 7

The foreword to this book claims that is 'an inspiring and powerful book' so my reading began full of anticipation. The preface explains that the book consists of a series of chapters which are based on interviews with fifteen male Open University students. Linking these together is a series of chapters which discuss current trends in the UK labour market and how these may have influenced the students to return to education as way of protecting, and in some cases enhancing, their future. So far the model sounds good, and it might well turn out to help motivate and inspire prospective mature students. I read on.

The first collection of chapters is linked under the heading Age of Uncertainty. I read the chapters eager to find out how to shake Uncertainty out of my life. The message seems to be: knowledge is the way out, get back to university and stay there. Well, I am here and have been for a while and certainty is not a well understood term around here. Other groupings include Stress of Presenteeism, Stress of Obsolescence, Age of the Skills Portfolio, Age of Early Retirement, A Crisis in Mens Health and The End of Work?

In all of these sections the format is the same: an interview with an OU student, with a great many common questions like: Why did you decide to do a degree? Have your studies changed you? (wouldn't be much of a course if it didn't, would it!) Would you recommend continuing education to other men? All rather predictable and routine. The answers given were, to me as an admissions tutor, common responses obtained from returning adult learners. The book also includes rather trifling and irrelevant details, e.g. 'George wore grey trousers and navy sweater under his lab coat' and 'Mahmood dressed sombrely'. Knowing this did not help me to empathise with either the learner or the author.

By the end, for me this book didn't live up to the billing. If you're thinking of doing an OU degree it may offer some guidance on the pitfalls and pleasure that await you, but I don't think this book is going to inspire you to do the degree, sorry. By the way, the preface was written by the OU's VC!

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ICE-BREAKING...AND AFTER

Staff Development in Action: A compendium of staff development resources and suggestions on how to use them.

Sally Brown and Phil Race
SEDA Paper 100
SEDA (1997) £12.00
ISBN 0 946815 79 8

When you are planning your next staff development workshop, or any other workshop for that matter, and need that little bit of inspiration to get you going, turn to this collection of staff development resources and suggestions. It includes a range of interesting and useful activities for icebreakers and introductions, encouraging interactivity, focusing on students, curriculum development, assessment, and workshop evaluation and action planning.

Each section lists what the resources can be used for, describes how they might be used, and includes materials that can be photocopied - with acknowledgement - as handouts or OHTs. It is then up to the reader to work out the detail of how and when to adapt the activities appropriately to their own contexts. On the whole the descriptions were very clear, and the materials self-explanatory, though at times I felt the need for further explanation.

What I found most interesting about the resource was not only the access it gave me to other people's tried and tested activities and the ideas these prompted, but also the insight it gave me into the authors' practice as staff developers, and the consequent questioning it provoked of my own.

Whether you are starting out in staff development, or have been doing it for years, this compendium of resources will be a valuable addition to your collection.

Sarah Mann
The University of Western Australia

NOTICE TO PUBLISHERS

Books for Review should be sent to
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GETTING OVER THE STYLE

Teaching with Style

Tony Grasha

Pittsburgh, Alliance, 1996 $47

ISBN 0-9645071-1-0

If I were to write a book about teaching and learning, I would hope that it would come out something like Tony Grasha's '*Teaching with Style*'. As might be inferred from the title, the underlying thread is a concern for taking account of learning styles and teaching styles. These are concepts that are anathema to some; and to others, notably some of my Psychology colleagues, merely the working out of personality traits. But the book is much more than that; for example, Grasha gives a comprehensive view of the conceptual bases of teaching and learning, including the effects of personality, as well as encouraging self-reflection.

There are one or two points where the US context suggests slightly different emphases from the UK experience, but this should simply provoke greater reflection on the part of the reader. For example, I am not convinced that the Grasha-Riechmann Student Learning Scale successfully makes the transatlantic transition.

This book provides a useful resource and reference tool for educational and staff developers as well as acting as a workbook for individual members of academic staff (in addition to numerous examples there are also 27 self-reflection exercises). Whether you are a new member of staff looking for just one book to help adjust to university teaching or an experienced academic wishing to polish up your act, this is one that I suggest you look at.

Bland Tomkinson
UMIST

FINDING YOUR WAY ON QUALITY STREET

Practical Pointers for Quality Assessment

Bill Cox and Amanda Ingleby

Kogan Page, 1997, £18.99

ISBN 0 7494 2188 6

This book is a brave attempt to write a practical guide to what used to be called Quality Assessment, and is now called Subject Review. It's a brave attempt because the ground has been shifting, even as the book was in preparation, so that the book's title, and a little of its detail, is already out of date before it hits the shelves.

No matter. In all important respects everything in the book is still relevant to the newly named process. The authors themselves acknowledge the difficulty of staying current, and they included a speculative look at 'the foreseeable future'. Since they are obviously well-informed, they got most of it right.

Based on an analysis of over 200 assessment reports, and a close study of the HEFCE Handbook for Quality Assessors, the book sets out to achieve several objectives: to inform about the Assessment process and likely changes; to help providers prepare for Assessment; to evaluate the process; to disseminate its outcomes; and to promote the developmental stimulus which Quality Assessment provides.

On the whole the authors succeed in each of their objectives. The least successful is probably the critical evaluation of Assessment, simply because an in-depth discussion could not be fully developed in a practically-oriented book of this kind, but the book can be recommended nevertheless as an excellent introduction to the Quality Assessment process and its context. Its most important contribution is in the practical advice offered to those preparing for Assessment. Each aspect is treated systematically - referring closely to the aide-memoire provided by the HEFCE for assessors. There are useful sections on the preparation of the self-assessment document, and the assessment visit itself. The content is thoughtful, well structured, and clearly presented.

One characteristic of good advice is that - even though they haven't thought of it themselves - to the recipients it often seems perfectly obvious. Much of what is in this book will appear common sense to many colleagues, and could be deduced by working carefully through the implications of the Quality Assessor's Handbook. But fortunately the authors have done that for us, and as a result have produced a book full of helpful directions on finding the way to quality.

Barry Jackson
Middlesex University

ARTICLES TO LOOK FORWARD TO..

Engineering Quality Tutorials

John McGrath suggests that an engineering approach to tutorials can enhance quality teaching

Enhancing Lectures with IT

Nancy Hunt explains how advanced presentation technologies can be used to improve lectures.

Tutorial transferable skills

Mark Griffiths provides ideas for first year tutors.

FORUM

The section where you have your say....
Contributions on all issues of importance to teachers in HE welcome.

CREDIT WHERE CREDIT'S DUE

Youthful Certificate course for staff new to teaching seeks to articulate with mature framework of qualifications, with view to credit accumulation and transfer....

Lots of institutions running Certificate courses now. Some of them SEDA-recognised... Must be people out there who know the answers to my questions. Like, how many credit points? What's the level? Does there have to be a relationship between hours of study and credit points? And how do you reckon the number of hours? Can't be just contact hours surely? Not when you're asking them to put together a portfolio? Include the work they're doing all the time?

Who's this guy? Big wheel, looks like. Harris, huh. What's he say? He's got a typology of postgraduate courses, four possible aims:

* research and scholarship
* preparation for research and deepening subject knowledge
* knowledge conversion
* professional and practice-related.[1]

OK, well, we want them to be scholarly, don't we? We'd like to deepen their subject knowledge, right? We're converting them to teachers, and we certainly want them to be professional in their practice. That's clear, then.

So, we're talking postgraduate level. So let's go and ask these people with experience. I dunno, you ask eight institutions, you get eight different answers. Take a look at the box below[2].

What's with these 3, 4, M offers? And what the heck is A? M looks good, I like M: these guys and gals engage with their material at level M, yeah? We're talking high level skills here, critical, analytical, reflexive.

Points and hours, let's see now. Looks like it could be ten hours to a point, looks like it could be 3.5, could be 'impossible to quantify'. But ten hours and thirty points, that's 300 hours! Now I found these Scots saying Initial training programmes should comprise 100 - 150 study hours.[3] Yeah, think we could live with that. Listen, these guys, these gals, they're on a steep learning curve, right? Getting their research going, maybe completing PhDs, leading field trips, seminars here, lectures there,

CREDIT POINTS FOR TEACHING CERTIFICATES

Details supplied by 8 different HE Institutions

Inst.	Program points	Level	because	Hours /point	Included
1	30	M	though material may be at lower levels, those taking taking part expected to engage with it at M level	10	self-study, face to face support assessment
2	40	4	cf. 4-year MEng and Teaching Certs	7.5	75 hours student learning per module, 4 modules
3	36 o.s.	3	in 120 Master's framework	10.7	
	40/20 n.s.	M/3	in 180 Master's framework		
4	45	3		3.5	in 2 modules
5	30	M	course demands critical, analytical & reflexive skills at this level		6 months p/t, mandatory for staff with no HE experience
6	50	A & M	10 for induction at A 10 each for core and option modules at M		
7	25 + 10	M	work-based learning at professional level	10	c.60 hrs assorted contact
8	16	4	12 for portfolio 4 for project	6.25	75 hours including learning group 25 hours including attendance

tutorials even, working their butts off, you think they got time for notional learning hours? Look, lady, I got things to do.

I see, thank you, Pro-Vice Chancellor. So, we got level M, maybe we don't need no credit points. Maybe we just go with the postgraduate certificate nomenclature. This guy here in *The Times Higher* says National learning credit transfer has no future.[4]

You said it, bud. OK, I just gotta wait for Dearing. Dearing's gotta Institute's gonna sort this all out.

Lesley MacDonald,
University of Durham
(full address on page 1)

1. Review of Postgraduate Education Martin Harris, HEFCE/CVCP/SCOP, May 1996
2. Eight responses to the above questions from a variety of HE institutions, summer 1997.
3. Accrediting Academic Practice in HE: the Scottish Project Anthony Luby, UCoSDA Briefing Paper 49 August 1997
4. National learning credit transfer has no future, The Times Higher, 22 August 1997, p 30

MARKS AND MEANINGS

In discussing *Honours Classifications: The Need for Transparency (The New Academic* 6.3.10-12), Harvey Woolf and David Turner grapple with the problem of comparability in assessment between and within universities. The questions they raise go to the heart of the "graduateness" debate and attempts to introduce qualitystandards in HE.

However, their article says little about the practical problem which academics face in the every day assessment process: What do marks mean? Debates about the appropriateness of one marking algorithm or another, or over a department's attitude to borderline students, become academic (pun intended) if they are not preceded by agreement about theimplied meanings of values and scores awarded for individual pieces of work.

I clearly recall, as a new lecturer faced with a daunting first pile of coursework essays, feeling totally uninformed about the kinds of marks I should be awarding. What was I supposed to be looking for? What quality of work should I expect? Did the work adequately reflect the level of study? How should I balance literacy and expression against research and originality? What deserved 65% and what deserved a bare 40% pass? Should (or, more to the point, could) differences be resolved to 1%, 5% or 10%? Bereft of terra firma, I had only two reference points: my own experience as a student and the collective wisdom of long-established colleagues. The first of these was far too ancient and limited in scope to be reliable and the second turned out to be almost as unhelpful.

Colleagues freely admitted that they had no better idea than I did: each had arrived at a personal set of rules of thumb. More recently the department has produced a written statement of meanings but it is a studiedly vague document deliberately designed, it seems, to avoid constraining those self same rules of thumb. Moreover, it has singularly failed to pre-empt debates of quite unjustified length at examiners meetings about how individual students should be graded.

Reflecting on this problem over the years (and admitting ignorance of whatever educational literature may exist on the subject), I have arrived at a syllogism to guide my marking behaviour:

The final degree grade awarded to a student is a public statement of something. (I have my own perception of what that something is. You also have your own, so I will refrain from proselytising.)

Degree grades depend, by some agreed institutional algorithm, on the cumulative marks given for individual pieces of work.

Therefore, I should award marks for individual pieces of work according to how well they fit my perception of the public interpretation of each degree grade.

That makes a fine statement of self-justification but, horror of horrors, it means a) that my marking is subjective, not objective, and b) that I set my own standards. The rules of my university, deliberately or not, encourage me in this approach. They specify a marking scale which only allows for useful discrimination over a 31% range and, furthermore, implies extended scope for failure and excellence: third, lower second, upper second and first classes. I gather that most universities apply a similar system and suspect that the reasoning behind it is lost deep in the mists of academic time.

The big problem comes, of course, when I am obliged to mark a piece of work, an MCQ for example, objectively. If I have been a reasonably effective teacher and if my students have been moderately diligent and conscientious, I might justifiably expect them to answer three quarters of the MCQ correctly. Does that mean they are all 'first class' students? How can I reconcile a linear scale with the weirdly skewed scale of standard degree classes? Naturally, I drop into the MCQ a few questions deliberately designed to sort wheat from chaff, and guesses are heavily penalised, but there is a limit to what you can do without occasioning widespread student demoralisation.

Fortunately, few of the department's modules rely solely on objectively

marked tests and so healthy subjectivity can be restored when marks are collated at the end of the semester. Curiously, we contrive annually to award degree grades according to a beautifully symmetrical Gaussian distribution with very short (1-5%) third class and first class tails.

The point I am making is that subjectivity seems to be the only practical approach to marking most types of university work and that inherently objective tests sit very ill with existing scales of degree classes. Subjectivity would be fine, provided that there was a consensus on the descriptors behind the appellations. Do all universities agree on what 2:1 and 2:2 signify? Do external examiners concur? Do students themselves understand the code? Do employers know what we mean? What about the bodies who fund graduate studentships?

Perhaps these issues have been debated and resolved elsewhere. If they have, excuse my ignorance, but the conclusions have yet to have any significant impact on academic behaviour. Unless territory is well mapped and clearly marked, it is disingenuous to argue over borders.

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INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Professional Accreditation of Teaching in Higher Education

In response to the Dearing Committee Report (July 1997), the Institute of Education is pleased to announce the introduction in September 1998 of a comprehensive programme aimed to provide professional accreditation for teaching in higher education. It is designed to meet the anticipated requirements for academic and professional accreditation currently being developed by The Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

The Programme

The programme has been created for academic and other teaching staff in higher education who wish to develop their skills and understanding in relation to learning, teaching, assessment, course and curriculum design, development, and management within higher education. It will serve the needs of staff from a wide range of disciplines, providing pathways which can lead to different levels of professional award. There will also be opportunities to incorporate accredited modules/courses run by other participating institutions and to integrate the programme with existing probationary and/or mentoring schemes.

Key features of the Programme

- Pathways for both probationer and experienced lecturers;
- Three phases to allow participants to match the programme to their own time/work schedules;
- Workshop format - integrating practice, discussion and reflection in group work; interactive lecture sessions;
- Credit-based structure with a choice of optional modules from the Institute of Education, University of London MA in Higher and Professional Education.

Who is it for?

The programme will be of interest not only to individuals, but also to higher education institutions seeking high quality, cost-effective professional training for their staff in teaching and learning in higher education. For further details, please contact Dr Greg Light (tel. 0171 612 6371; e-mail g.light@ioe.ac.uk).

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