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CETL Journal

Innovations in Practice

Volume 2, Number 3, July 2010

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Produced by the Learning Development Unit

Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

CETL Journal

Innovations in Practice

Purpose

The journal seeks to offer authors the opportunity to share a range of subject and pedagogical experiences and practices. We invite authors to submit manuscripts under a range of headings including a peer reviewed section; professional matters; teaching matters; discussion forum; undergraduate/postgraduate section; case studies; book reviews; and reflections on practice.

The journal has an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) which should increase the accessibility of the publication to external sources and the intention is to publish in both hard copy and electronic format. In addition, the editorial team hopes that you will see the launch of this journal as an opportunity to disseminate your subject and/or pedagogical practices in a supportive and developmental process, as well as being a vehicle for publication in other external journals in the future.

Contents

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Editorial

Welcome to this edition of the Innovations in Practice journal. This is the fifth edition that we have produced which is a testament to all the people who have taken the time to prepare papers for submission. The Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning comes to an end in July after five years and this journal came out of an idea in one of our research and dissemination meetings. What is good news is that we will be able to continue to sustain the journal into the future and publish more editions. Can I take this opportunity to thank all the contributors over the previous five editions and I look forward to receiving your submissions in the future.

Before I provide an overview of the papers submitted to this edition can I give you early warning of a special edition we are looking to publish in October 2010. The focus will be on joint or single author submissions of research studies from undergraduate and/or postgraduate students. This will give many staff and students the opportunity to disseminate work that you have been undertaking and disseminate it to a wider audience.

In this edition of the journal our first submission is Charlie McCarthy's paper that addresses how the Teach First team at Liverpool John Moores University proactively provide trainees with positive school based experiences. In his paper Charlie describes how he pursued a personal contact at a Specialist Humanities College in order to set up a contrasting schools week looking at the work of a 'Special' school that caters for pupils with special educational needs. His paper provides an interesting insight into the planning, preparation and underlying thinking that took place before the trainees visited the school.

Our second paper by Gill Adams explores the notion of supporting M level learning. In her paper Gill describes how she has been working in the field of education for over twenty years, initially teaching in schools before moving to support teachers and heads of department in a consultancy role. More recently Gill made a move into higher education and this shift to a new role in a different environment forced her to re-examine her views on learning and on teaching, specifically within the context of teacher professional development and Masters level engagement. In this paper, written towards the end of Gill's first year in higher education she explores some of the tensions, challenges and opportunities of teaching at M level.

Our third paper by Paul Killen examines how mentoring in school is recognised as being key to a successful model of partnership. Paul notes however that many issues can impact upon how successful a school's mentoring may be. As such, his article explores through a case study how placing multiple trainees simultaneously in a school, can improve the quality of the experiences for all involved. He shares in his findings feedback from trainees, mentors and schools in gauging the impact of a 'multiple trainee' partnership model.

Our next paper by Simon Roberts discusses how using a constructivist learning theory and Windschitl's four dimensional model of constructivist dilemmas in practice (*conceptual dilemmas, pedagogical dilemmas, cultural dilemmas, and political dilemmas*) he examines the challenges and difficulties experienced by a number of participation sports coaches. Simon specifically examines this in relation to how they are implemented through 'model based instruction principles' and how they contribute to an annual training programme.

Our fifth paper by carol Maynard and Clare Milsom explores the notion of whether it is possible to identify and measure great teaching? In their paper they note that there are a range of measures and initiatives that should help us evidence quality such as The UK Professional Standards Framework. They continue by suggesting that whilst these standards are not compulsory across the sector and even in Liverpool John Moores University where there is a well developed Continuing Professional Development programme framework take up is inconsistent and attendance and achievement unmonitored. Carol and Clare note that during the last 10 years enhancement of the student experience has been central to Liverpool John Moores Universities Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy. Consequently they pose the question: 'So, how is our institution able to recognise great teaching via its strategies?' In responding to this Carol and Clare discuss some of the current influences and mechanisms for identifying and recognising great teaching and consider recommendations for how we may enhance these strategies further within Liverpool John Moores University.

The sixth paper by Deborah Pope and Nicola Whiteside. This examines the rationale for the introduction of a staged assessment process incorporating peer feedback in an existing undergraduate assignment. In their paper Deborah and Nicola explores the students' views and perceptions of the assessment experience and presents findings which indicate that it was received positively by the majority. Indeed, their findings include evidence of enhanced understanding of the subject matter, task and engagement in deeper approaches to learning, and greater self-regulation of learning as a result of the approach.

Our next paper by Mike Aiello and John Clarke focuses upon the development of a particular pattern of delivery and support within international education. There model often called 'transnational teaching' has emerged in which students do not travel to other countries to receive tuition, rather they remain in their home country and are taught by academic staff from the validating university who travel out to teach some or part of the programme. This is often popularly referred to as the "flying faculty" model. Mike and John note in their paper that delivery of the programme is almost inevitably intense and highly concentrated given the costs of delivery and support. Such direct teaching is also of course reinforced by different forms of distance support for learners such as virtual learning environments, teleconferencing and the like. In concluding Mike and John note that whilst this model may be potentially attractive it also

raises fundamental issues about the ways in which we structure teaching and learning and our models of learning based on conceptions of digestion and making sense of ideas over time.

The eighth paper presents a case study of a model in which academic staff strengthen and develop partnerships with external organisations. In doing so, these partnerships give students greater opportunities for a rich and authentic experience of the workplace both within and outside of the curriculum. Building on the success of JMUpstart, an undergraduate dance company founded at Liverpool John Moores University that provides students with experience of a professional working environment as part of their programme also led to the creation of Sport Start. As the name suggests Sport Start has its focus within the sport development subject areas and acts as a means of promoting the student 'workforce' to employers and external organisations. Track continues by discussing how Sport Start matches student skills and knowledge with the needs of employers and the wider community through curricular and extra-curricular activities. In concluding Track notes that the opportunity to work with employers and external organisations in a variety of ways provides students with an enriched experience that enhances students' professional competencies, entrepreneurial skills and ultimately their employability.

The ninth paper by Liz James and Kay Standing provides an interesting insight into the challenges and opportunities of embedding links between teaching and research within the Higher Education sector. Their paper presents the findings research into the possibilities of establishing an undergraduate e-journal within the School of Social Science. The paper also outlines the challenges they faced when developing the e-journal and possibilities for future development.

Our final paper by John McCormick provides an overview of his thoughts on mentoring. John notes that as a subject mentor, then a professional mentor and now a mentor trainer he notes he actually doesn't 'do a lot of mentoring'!! so it is not easy for him to reflect on how well he mentors others. Nevertheless, in his paper John notes how mentoring skills are still important to him in his working life and he discusses how these can be used to support individuals' personal and professional development.

I do hope you find something of interest in this edition and I look forward to further submissions from you all in the near future

Professor Philip Vickerman
Editor of Innovations in Practice

Special Schools - what have they ever done for us?

Charlie McCarthy

Writing about teacher's attitudes to inclusion Ellis *et al* (2008) found that many endorse inclusion as a principle but have at the same time, concerns about the practicalities. They found that teacher's attitudes and values are crucial to the success of inclusion in mainstream schools. They also call for opportunities in Initial Teacher Training (ITT) for teachers to work with pupils with special needs and not just receive information-based training that is delivered in a University lecture theatre. With this in mind I attempted to arrange a 'Contrasting School' placement that might address some of these issues and at the same time, provide our Teach First trainees with a memorable and useful experience in a school other than their own.

Teach First is a charity whose mission is to 'address educational disadvantage by transforming exceptional graduates into effective, inspirational teachers and leaders in all fields.' We take 'good' graduates straight from their degree courses, train them on a Summer Institute Training scheme and place them in Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances (SFCC) for a minimum of two years. A 'good' graduate has at least an upper second class degree. TeachFirst is a national employment based route to QTS.

As part of the Teacher Development Agency (TDA) requirements of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) all TeachFirst trainees (TeachFirst call them 'participants') are required to spend a week in a second school during the spring term. In the Merseyside region, LJMU Tutors undertake to arrange this week for all our participants. This is not the case in other regions where it tends to be down to the placement school to arrange with a neighbouring school where the participant should go. The culture of the LJMU team is proactive and we are always trying to provide our trainees with positive experiences, seek feedback with a view to improving what we do in forthcoming years.

Considering these goals for the Contrasting School Week, I pursued a personal contact at Crosby High Specialist Humanities College to set up a contrasting schools week looking at the work of a 'Special' school, who cater for pupils with SEN. I wanted to set up the initial placement and to evaluate the week based on feedback from the participating trainee teachers and the staff at Crosby High.

Principal aims of the week

The aims of a Contrasting School Week are many and varied but include

- Classroom observation, allowing opportunities for beginner teachers to observe more experience colleagues teach.
- Peer observation, observing each other as beginner teachers in a new setting.
- Gain experience of how a recognised successful SEN school deals with pupils with Special Needs.
- Group work, allow Teach First participants to teach together and gain from a shared experience.

The introduction of circular 9/92 by the Department of Education (DfE 1992) has moved the responsibility of training increasingly to schools and away from HEI. This requirement for a Contrasting School Week provides an opportunity for us in HEIs to develop collaborative practice between ourselves and our partner schools. Contrasting schools week, although a requirement of the TDA for QTS, is not a subject that features greatly in the academic literature. This may be because it lasts such a short time and is not thought worthy of much attention. However there are principles involved when a school organises any training re: quality of the experience, relevance to the trainee, what they take back to their own school that makes this sort experience worthy of examination. There is also the question of reflecting upon the experience to enable the trainee to obtain maximum benefit from it and so be able to take new knowledge and apply it back in their own teaching situation.

Croll and Moses (2000) contrast different views that currently exist in education about the appropriate educational placement for children with special educational needs. The Teach First participants in Crosby High School were all coming from Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances(SFCC) and it would be logical to assume that they were working in schools with a large number of pupils who have special needs of one form or another. Given the educational background of the trainees it is unlikely that many of them had much experience of 'special needs' pupils and indeed of 'Special Schools'. Contrasting school's week was an opportunity to introduce trainees to this debate and to give them an insight to how others, skilled in working with these pupils, went about building meaningful educational experiences for their pupils. Crosby High School had obtained an 'Outstanding' in their last Ofsted inspection (December 2007). I was therefore confident that the school could provide meaningful opportunities for our trainees to take away and reflect upon. In a TDA study from Elms Bank Special School an 11-19 special school in Bury with 152 students, it found that a great many staff, from all sectors of the workforce had skills and talents which needed to be recognised and that some staff who would not normally be involved in leading CPD took leading roles. This study found that the experience of delivering CPD enhanced the confidence and self esteem of the staff involved. With this in mind LJMU Tutors and the Professional Mentor at the school wanted participants to observe and engage with Crosby High staff from all levels of the organisation and not only those who may have formal recognition for CPD delivery such as Head of Departments or Faculty Leaders. In this way we hoped that it would be a rewarding experience for the school staff as well as for the trainees.

Peer observation is used in many schools to extend teachers skills by 'learning from each other' (TDA CPD in practice). By placing more than one trainee into the contrasting school we wanted to create at least one opportunity in the week to allow this to happen. The Teach First Participants are well used to having lessons observed from Subject Mentors and University Tutors but unless their placement schools have been in the position to set it up, it is unlikely that they have had the opportunity to watch each other teach in front of a class up till now. The three participants at Crosby all have different placement schools and have never seen each other teach.

This is a summary of the planning and preparation and underlying thinking that took place before the trainees visited the school. This placement was offered to all TeachFirst trainees on Merseyside and three Mathematics teachers took up the opportunity in January 2010.

Feedback from the school and the trainees.

Feedback was sought from the trainees in two ways.

- Discussion with the Head, the Professional Mentor and the University Tutor on the Wednesday lunchtime of the Contrasting School Week.
- Written feedback was received at February half term to give the trainees an opportunity to reflect upon their experience.

The discussion at the half way point of the experience focused on the structure of the school day and the tracking pupil progress system that the school used to set meaningful targets for their pupils. One trainee commented:

> 'I didn't realise until this week, that a Special School ran a timetable and entered pupils for external qualifications.'

There was a realisation, at this early stage, that Crosby High was catering for similar pupils that the trainees had in their classes, mostly in their 'bottom sets'. A discussion developed around how these pupils tend to get 'forgotten' in the pressurised environment of the mainstream secondary school. There was a realisation among the trainees of the resources that goes into the C/D borderline pupils in the rush to maximise the five A-C score. Pupils with predicted grades of F and G, although this may be a major achievement for them and their teachers, tend to be somewhat overlooked in the organisational mission which is focussed further up the level ladder.

The written feedback came on a form designed at LJMU. This allows comments to be collected analysed. The order of what follows is how it was collected on the sheet.

What were the most positive experiences of the week?

'Team teaching was a very positive experience and allowed me to interact with the pupils.'
'I gained a lot form observing maths lessons particularly those for higher ability pupils as many were as able as those I teach'
'Getting to work with pupils on a 1-2-1 basis'

Give a brief overview of the teaching and observational opportunities you have had this week.

'I observed lessons, often acting as TA. Followed a form for a day'
'Took part in planning and teaching the 'Logic Faculty' morning for the entire Year 9'
'Opportunity to observe and take part in curriculum enrichment on Wednesday afternoon'

Is there anything that you will take from this week which will help your teaching in the future?

'Positive behaviour policy/no paper classrooms/ limited use of exercise books/use of kinaesthetic resources.'
'Focus on numeracy and literacy in all subjects'
'The attitude towards misbehaviour was very different in it's positive approach. I'm sure with a number of my classes a less confrontational reaction would help control incidents as well as reducing the frequency. The scoring of each pupil's performance from 0 to 5 is also something I have initiated in my lessons as it enables me to praise those who consistently perform well.'

Any other comments

'In general the week was thoroughly rewarding and very useful. As I would imagine many other TeachFirst participants would gain from the experience and arguably spending a week there was a bit of a luxury, perhaps a shorter stay(half a week?) with two groups may enable more visitors to benefit.'

'I would like to thank everyone at the school for this informative and incredibly useful experience.' 'Had a fantastic week and would like to send my thanks to all those involved at Crosby High.'

Feedback from the school

Feedback was sought from the Head and the Professional Mentor. Although it was only a very brief placement the school felt the trainees had gained a lot from the experience. This is supported in their written feedback which has been shared with the school.

The TeachFirst trainees were unlike other undergraduate and postgraduate trainees the school has had in the past. They come from outside the Merseyside region and so were easily recognised as different from most of the staff. Many pupils are interested in these differences and in the Trainee's backgrounds. This instantly puts the Trainees on the pupils 'radar' and helps them get swept along in the culture of the school.

This placement also allowed the school's PGCE Science student to work with and observe the Teach First trainees. This creates opportunities for young teachers on different routes to QTS to compare notes during their training.

Discussion

This exercise, although involving only three trainees on placement for one week, contains some interesting outcomes for all of us involved. TeachFirst is committed to encouraging their trainees to take on the mantle of 'leading learners'. A picture of such a member of staff in a department would be someone who is open to new ideas, willing to listen and willing to try new things in their classrooms that might benefit their pupils. It is part of the 'learning to lead' agenda which is also embedded in the TeachFirst programme (Blandford 2006).

We cover the issue of 'special needs' and 'inclusion' at the Summer Institute where the initial training of our participants occurs. This training tends to be a bit theoretical, lecture based without the trainees having much classroom experience. The Contrasting School Experience is potentially a much more powerful tool and rewarding experience if the partnership between the University and the school is a good one and if the aims and objectives of the exercise are clearly understood by all those involved. It is through building this partnership that positive outcomes can emerge for the trainees and hopefully for their pupils that they teach, back in their placement schools. It allows trainees to gain more experience and to reflect upon issues such as differentiation, target setting, assessing pupil progress and the role of the Special School in our education provision for Key Stages 3 and 4.

So returning to the question of what Special Schools have done for us. The TeachFirst website states:

> 'An inspirational teacher can raise the aspirations of a young person in a challenged school.' (**www.teachfirst.org.uk**)

Perhaps our relationship with the 'Special Needs Sector' needs revisiting. In our attempts to create 'inspirational teachers' we must expose them to the full spectrum of the school community in this country. Therefore Special Schools have a very important role to play not only in training TeachFirst trainees but for all students training to teach. There is a wealth of expertise and talent that we may be neglecting to the detriment of training programmes and also in the mainstream's school dealing with pupils who have 'Special Needs'. When was the last time you heard of a mainstream school turning to its Special neighbour seeking help with staff training or advice on how to teach Mathematics to pupils

who are struggling to get to Level 3? Perhaps it happens more often than we think it does. But if it isn't happening in your situation then maybe it's something we should all think about.

Finally, in the extensive list of 'Q' standards that we stress so much to our trainee teachers, perhaps there is one important standard missing. Surely to gain Qualified Teacher Status all teacher trainees should spend some time with pupils who have recognised Special Needs? Contrasting Schools Week is an ideal opportunity for delivering this. After all, inspirational teachers have to be inspirational for all the pupils they teach and not just for the pupils in the top sets.

Biographical note

Charlie McCarthy is the Science and Professional Tutor with Teach First Merseyside within the Faculty of Education, Community and Leisure at Liverpool John Moores University.

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- **www.tda.gov.uk/teachers/continuing professionaldevelopment/cpd-in-practice**
- **www.teachfirst.org.uk**

Supporting M level learning: exploring tensions

Gill Adams

Introduction

I have been working in the field of education for over twenty years, initially teaching in schools before moving to support teachers and heads of department in a consultancy role. Recently, I made a move into higher education and this shift to a new role in a different environment has forced me to re-examine my views on learning and on teaching, specifically within the context of teacher professional development and Masters level engagement. In this paper, written towards the end of my first year in higher education in my previous post in another university, I explore some of the issues in terms of my teaching in this context.

In examining my practice I make use of Brookfield's four lenses: my own autobiography as a learner and teacher, my colleagues' experiences (through observations and critical discussions), engagement with theory and through the eyes of students (Brookfield, 1995a). Working closely with two colleagues on one module, I gained much from their robust engagement in critical conversations and observations of my practice, feeling both challenged and supported in a way I hope my students feel. In terms of theory, much of my knowledge has been constructed through an investigation into mathematics learning and more generally by literature from the discipline of learning and teaching in higher education, specifically with regard to teacher professional development. To further support my professional development, I have employed 'the discipline of noticing' (Mason, 2002): '…what you do not notice, you cannot act upon; you cannot choose to act if you do not notice an opportunity.' (ibid, p. 7). Engaging critically with my practice in this way has led to the identification of the issues focussed upon here. However, I ask myself whether these tools are sufficient, whether there is more that I can do in order to move forward. Allied to this, I ask how I might use these tools to support students in their own professional development.

Background

In order for me to fully understand issues I am facing now I feel that it is important to briefly review my own history as teacher and learner.

Learning has been important to me throughout my adult life. At school, I drifted through, barely managing to get by and initially continued in much the same way at university. In the final year of my degree I started to engage, the education courses I studied provoked me – I read about less traditional forms of education, exploring philosophies, seeking alternatives, vaguely aware that something more radical was necessary to engage learners.

Later, I studied for a Masters Degree in Education, relishing the buzz of discussion of relevant educational issues with fellow students, enjoying the discipline of academic study and the chance to reflect on practice. I have since completed two other Masters modules and plan to begin a doctorate. I still feel the need to compensate somehow for my poor degree (I got a 2:2, it didn't mean anything to me at the time), to prove myself and have engaged in further mathematics and science courses at undergraduate level. All of this recent studying

has given me valuable insight into learning and provided me with experience on which to test out the theories of learning that I am revisiting in my teaching.

Here, I want to pull together the various theories and ill-formed ideas rattling around in my head, borrowed from my studies of leadership and management, of teaching and learning, of consultancy models and from an emerging theme of evidence based practice. Here I will explore tensions in my practice around the issue of independent learning, what this means at Masters level and how to support the students in achieving independence.

I need to expand a little on my current view of how learning takes place and my role in facilitating it. In attempting to describe this view it is important to recognise that there are inherent difficulties in articulating this. As Jaworski states:

> Constructivists have to behave in this way, being constantly aware that the other person's interpretation might be very different to that which they themselves wished to share. This level of awareness promotes a healthier possibility of people moving consciously closer in understanding. (Jaworski, 1994:23)

Having sounded that note of caution, I declare myself an 'aspiring constructivist'. For me, this acknowledges that a constructivist approach may not always be evident in my practice, but that through critical engagement with, and reflection on, practice, I strive towards it. This constructivist approach involves:

- providing scaffolding, frameworks, questions and stimulus material to engage and challenge students
- endeavouring to create a learning community (in as much as one can be 'created'; Wenger holds that 'communities of practice are fundamentally self-organising systems (Wenger, 1998:2) where all students are able to participate, to develop and use their 'voice'
- involving students in the assessment of their own work and that of peers in order to better understand their own strengths and areas for development (Elwood and Klenowski, 2002)

I wonder if this is similar to what Jaworski meant when she says 'I feel rather happy to be a sort of constructivist – my own sort.' (ibid, 1994:34)?

Learning and teaching at Masters level

One of the level descriptors for the award of Masters level qualifications is that students should have 'the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development' (QAA, 2008:21). How do I support students to achieve this independence without creating dependence on my support? I need somehow to scaffold students learning whilst aiming to have faded my support by the end of the course. This notion of scaffolding-and-fading, derived from Bruner's scaffolding (1986) and developed by Mason and Johnston-Wilder (2006), gives a framework for teachers to support learners whilst at the same time acknowledging the need to reduce this support so as not to create dependence. Judging when to 'fade' is by no means straightforward; students require different levels of support and some have well established surface approaches to learning which act as a barrier.

This 'surface approach' to learning (Marton and Saljo cited in Biggs and Tang, 2007) is one which I fear is all too easy to slip into in our current education system. Students overburdened with 'content knowledge' and lacking time may adopt a strategic approach aimed at taking in enough

knowledge to satisfy the demands of the accreditation system. Indeed, in my own recent study (a second year undergraduate physics course) I have, on occasion, glanced towards surface learning as a possible solution to my own time pressures; this despite the fact that I have consciously taken the course in order to deepen my understanding and make connections between mathematics and physics. This account of a tutorial (drawn from my own reflections on my teaching) is an example of what can happen:

> **The worrying tutorial** – preparing for resubmission (Student A)
>
> The student begins by saying that she only has ten minutes and speaks rapidly, with a note of desperation in her voice. 'I just don't understand what I've got to do. I did Masters level assignments at X University, they passed and I know this is better. I know it is better because I've spent longer on it, I did the others in an afternoon.' She flicked through the pages of her assignment. 'Look, I've referred to literature here, what else do I need to say? … So do I just need to…. Tell me what to do and I'll do it'. I felt swamped by her words, unable to see how to begin to help her in the time she was allowing.

A's focus is on 'getting the task out of the way with minimum trouble, while appearing to meet course requirements' (Biggs and Tang, 2007:22). Biggs lists several factors which may result in students adopting a surface approach; these include lack of time (clearly an issue here) and misunderstanding requirements. It is this understanding that I have a responsibility to foster. What can I do to make these requirements more explicit?

Parallels can be drawn between the surface approach to learning and the 'acquisition metaphor' (Sfard, 2008) where learning has traditionally been viewed as acquiring knowledge in much the same way as we 'accumulate material goods' (Sfard, 2008:32). I am reminded of much of my own early education here and want to know how to help to shift students from this surface approach to a deep approach to learning, where learners are focussing on understanding and 'meaning making'. Clearly this fits broadly within constructivist theories of learning, where 'knowledge has to be built up by each individual learner, it cannot be packaged and transferred from one person to another' (von Glasersfeld, 1996:25)

In my particular setting, I believe that deep learning is made more difficult by the structure of the courses and the mode of assessment, with students taking 20 credit modules, each lasting only ten weeks and typically assessed by one summative assignment.

Student voice

So what is this 'independent learning ability' and how does it manifest itself at Masters level? For me, a key aspect of this independence is 'voice'. I struggled myself to develop a 'voice' in new learning communities and see others unsure of what this means and how to achieve it. Northedge, seeking to explore how we can meet the increasingly diverse needs of students in higher education, describes learning as a process of developing competence as a user of specialist discourses through participation in knowledge communities (Northedge, 2003). Here then, my role would be to support students in what Northedge describes as increasingly 'generative' participation in the appropriate knowledge communities. He recognises that the 'struggle to develop an effective voice through which to 'speak' the discourse, whether in writing or in class, can be long and difficult' (Northedge, 2003:25). This resonates with my own experience of Masters level students trying to find their voices, developing confidence and feeling that they have permission to speak.

There are parallels too with my earlier work in researching mathematics learning, where I made links between constructivism and the construct of 'learners as authors' (Povey *et al*, 2004) where learners are described as being members of a knowledge making community, using their 'mathematical voice to enquire, interrogate and reflect upon what is being learned and how' (Povey *et al*, 2004:43).

An example from a critical conversation with a colleague illustrates some of the challenges faced around developing this 'voice'. Student B was studying in my face-to-face group on the 'Learning and Teaching' module, a module that is often taken as a first module for Masters level students. For student B, this was her fifth module. What follows is an extract from a conversation between my colleague (M) and myself (G) after M had observed a tutorial with student B just over half way through this module:

G: B hasn't got, she's not got the licence to talk has she? I think that's the thing and its trying to give her that licence to talk. Some of it's actually… some stuff comes out in her assignment more than what she said, so its there, its just getting the confidence to put it out I think….
(…)
M: I really like that expression that you've come up with, 'the licence to talk'. It's almost that…as well that… the licence to take risks with your opinion and judgement, in the sense of putting them out there

This 'licence to talk' or the development of voice is an important feature of work at M level. Although the early stages of study at this level will 'involve peripheral and vicarious participation with variant understanding' (Northedge, 2003:21) our aim is to support students to reach a position of active participation in the debate. Listening again to the conversation, I note M's affirmation (line 6) and am taken aback by how powerful this is for me in terms of confirming and validating my place in the 'knowledge community'. I need to seek opportunities to provide this kind of affirmation for students through formal and informal feedback. I note here, too, that 'voice' can manifest itself orally and in writing and I believe that students need to reach a level of confidence and fluency with either mode.

Developing independence

If this 'independent learning ability', this ability to participate actively in an appropriate knowledge community is one of our goals for the award of Masters level how do we communicate this to students? How do we support them in progressing towards this goal? Here again, I return to my own philosophy of teaching. I note my preference to start from students own experiences of learning, to encourage them to explore these in order to contextualise their learning. Asking students to read about deep and surface approaches to learning or to consider Skemp's (1976) discussion of understanding in the light of their own experiences can provoke those rare flashes of insight, vital in moving learning forward. Deliberately selecting readings which are likely to produce disturbance or cognitive dissonance is important in learning, although it may be that the 'classic source for disturbances to professional practice is in watching colleagues at work' (Mason, 2002:140). The notion of disturbance resonates with my own experience as a learner. Reflecting on my early education experiences I felt I had been drifting or dreaming my way through these. As Mason says: 'People 'wake up' when there is some sort of disturbance from the expected flow…' (Mason & Johnston-Wilder, 2004:68). Disturbance could provide a key to promoting independence amongst learners in my own teaching.

Disturbance can be characterised by 'critical incidents', unplanned incidents which may form the basis of subsequent learning. They have been described as '…flash-points that illuminate in an electrifying instant' (Woods cited in Denscombe 2007:204) though more typically I believe they are '…produced by the way we look at a situation; a critical incident is an interpretation of the significance of an event' (Tripp, 1993:8). It may be that an incident only becomes critical for us some time after the event. Having noticed an incident, hidden assumptions may be revealed for analysis and power relationships examined (Brookfield, 1995a).

Central to this theme of independence is the discipline of critically reflecting on and analysing one's own practice. I am reminded of the familiar notion of double-loop learning (Argyris and Schon, 1974), viewing it as a response to disturbance. 'Assumption hunting' (Brookfield, 1995a:3) is important in the examination of differences between one's theories-in-use and one's espoused theories.

The courses I teach on, though academic in nature, are inextricably linked to practice. Prompted to revisit experiential learning, primarily through the work of Brookfield (1995b) and Moon (2004) I come to see the work of Kolb from a fresh perspective. Moon (2004:114) notes that Kolb's learning cycle has been criticised for being too simplistic but I would argue that herein lies the key to its widespread acceptance. Kolb provides us with a framework to guide us in our learning. Such frameworks are invaluable starting points, particularly to teachers with little time to spare. Offering a somewhat simplistic framework gives the student a foot on the climbing wall, enabling them to glimpse an alternative view of their world. The teacher has then to find a means to support the students to climb higher without restricting their route choice. These frameworks, coupled with examples of how they may be used in practice and complemented by revised models of the framework (as for example, Cowan's revision of Kolb's cycle, incorporating more detailed account of the processes of reflection (Cowan cited in Moon, 2004:115)) provide the learner with a means to get started whilst also opening up possibilities for further growth.

Further scaffolding

I have already discussed some of the possible scaffolds to support this move to independence, particularly exploring the role of disturbance. I have identified the crucial place of voice (spoken and written). Questioning has long been an important tool in my practice and I could usefully explore ways to support students in using questioning more explicitly as a tool for their own professional development (see for example Harrison, 2004).

Modelling is important too, not just the modelling of processes and strategies (for example, strategies for reading academic papers) but also modelling my own learning to students. It is difficult to push others to make shifts in their awareness or perspective but by working explicitly on my own practice of learning and teaching students are more likely to begin to work on their own (Mason, 2002). Following a tutorial observed by a colleague we discussed this issue of developing independence and the use of modelling. Reflecting further on this now it is clear that there is much I can do in terms of developing shared expectations of student and teacher (rather than just sharing my own or course expectations) revisiting and refining these together throughout the course.

Working with a colleague to model critical engagement with literature is an area I would like to explore further. I was introduced to this when studying with the Open University where

part of my study materials was a recorded conversation of three tutors discussing a journal article. An example of this dialogue in writing can be found in Buckridge and Guest's discussion of pedagogical responses to an increasingly diverse range of students (Buckridge and Guest, 2007). These 'conversations' provide useful examples of the kind of academic engagement we are looking for and a useful starting point would be to use existing examples (such as those mentioned) as a basis for an activity.

I have alluded to the role of frameworks and believe that they do have a role to play, providing easy access to an analysis of an incident. It is true that they carry risks: Boud and Walker warn against the dangers of 'recipe following' in reflective practice in education pointing out that it can create false expectations of the nature of reflection and what learning it might lead to (Boud and Walker, 1998:3). However, these recipes exist and students are quick to find such tools so I argue that it is preferable to engage in a critical discussion of their merits and take them as starting points.

My own exploration of action research provides an example of starting from a framework and could be used to model the process to students. Gaining a broad overview of the origins of the discipline of action research, from the work of Lewin (see McNiff and Whitehead, 2002) and Elliot (1991), and making use of frameworks for conducting action research I explored alternative conceptions of the nature of the action research cycle (McNiff *et al's* diagram representing action research as a 'generative transformational evolutionary process' (2003:28)). Relating these to my understanding of critical reflection and of other research disciplines, I was able to develop a structure to meet both my needs and the needs of my students and justify it in relation to literature. Articulating this process and exploring features such as adopting a questioning approach, 'digging deeper' or exploring the literature further and having the confidence to adapt models would help to give students not only the 'licence to talk' but also the licence to create.

Listening again to a conversation with my mentor following an observation, I was struck by her mention of academic assertiveness. Later, I rediscovered an article on supporting groupwork (Moon, 2009) where academic assertiveness is defined as 'as set of emotional and psychological orientations and behaviours that enables a learner appropriately to manage the challenges to the self in the course of learning and her experiences in formal education.' (ibid, p.8) Moon expands on this, listing behaviours indicative of academic assertiveness. Amongst these she includes 'the finding of an appropriate 'voice" (ibid, p.9). Although the materials and suggested activities provided by Moon are designed for undergraduates they could usefully be adapted to provoke student discussion around academic assertiveness early on in their Masters experience.

Assessment

No discussion of learning and teaching is complete without touching upon assessment. Many Masters modules are short, 20 credit modules, often with one summative assessment at the end of the module. There may be advantages in longer modules, allowing students the opportunity to develop both their 'identities as members of the chosen knowledge community' (Northedge, 2003:26) and the skills necessary to participate. I would like to see assessment structured through the course, with several assignments combined to form a continuous assessment score, which, together with a final assignment will give the grade for the module. This would give students more of a structure or scaffold for their learning whilst providing feedback on the progress they were making and the next steps they needed to take

(Sadler, 1998). Importantly too, it provides the tutor with feedback, enabling teaching and support to be revised and adapted as necessary. Of course, assessment need not be formalised for this to happen but making it a compulsory element ensures that students engage early on with reading, thinking and writing. This can only help them in their development as members of a knowledge community.

I was inspired to read how teachers in one university had set about improving their own assessment practices, reflecting that much of my practice in Ethiopia was built around similar goals to theirs; where students '…grow in a community of shared practice where nothing in the assessment process is hidden and students become assessors of their own learning' (Elwood and Klenowski, 2002:243).

Yet more questions…

Pulling together the preceding discussion, I am left with more questions. Is it possible to reach a stage where students are fully responsible for their learning without first exploring with them what we mean by learning? The problem is that this is a vast area of study in itself, with multiple perspectives on learning emerging (Sfard, 1998; Moon, 2004 for example).

Is it possible for students to have full responsibility within the confines of an assessed course? Paulo Friere, discussing 'problem-posing education' as opposed to the banking model of education, explores the roles of students and teachers, arguing that through dialogue: 'They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow' (Friere, 1996:61). He goes further 'The students – no longer docile listeners – are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher.' (ibid, p. 62). The possibilities offered by this model of education excite me; the naming of 'teacher-student' and 'students-teachers' (Friere, 1996:61) suggests to me a possible re-naming of roles in higher education. Never comfortable with the term 'lecturer' nor indeed with 'lead-learner' I struggle to find an appropriate name for what I do. Perhaps 'teacher-learner' comes closest. 'Facilitator' is used by many but somehow just doesn't seem to do the role justice. I want to engage in further work to clarify my own role in my own head.

Prioritising my own professional development needs

Writing (and thinking about writing) this has helped me reclaim my authority. My first eight months in higher education left me feeling deskilled and undervalued. Accustomed to taking a strategic role in my work, I felt denied even a participants' voice. In addition, I was grappling with the new context and a shift in identity (Boyd *et al*, undated). I feel I have now arrived at a stronger place from which to engage and begin to make my own contributions to improvements in practice. This contribution to the 'bigger picture' is a key part of my future development.

Having examined some of my experience at university thus far, I am left thinking 'now what?' (Driscoll, 1994:48). How do I make use of this examination to identify priorities for development? Student evaluations provide me with some food for thought but generally lack the depth of reflection that I seek. At present, then, the best sources I have are my own critical reflections, grounded in literature and the conversations with and observations of, my mentor and critical friend. This acknowledgement in itself throws up an area for development; a need to engage students in deeper, more meaningful reflections and feedback and to seek out the observations of other professionals, those whom I believe will challenge me further. I see clearly now steps I need to take in further exploring and supporting students in their learning and I am impatient to continue.

I started by questioning whether the lenses I use currently to critically reflect on my practice are sufficient. A useful additional perspective can be brought from conversations with critical friends working outside my immediate discipline (or indeed, from outside education). There are practical difficulties here but I think it is worthy of further exploration. In addition, I need to make the space to engage critically with peers around teaching and learning issues, including those discussed here. I am tentatively exploring ideas for collaborative action research, aware that I want (and need) to keep learning, and will start work on my doctorate later this year.

Having clarified my own position and identified my 'next steps' I am in a strong position to proceed rejuvenated and with purpose.

…in those few brief moments when we feel we have participated in an informed choice, when we have acted freshly and appropriately, there is a sense of freedom, of meaning, of worth-whileness and self-esteem. It is these moments of personal freedom which keep us going. (Mason, 2002:8)

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Merseyside Second School Placement Review

Paul Killen

Abstract

Mentoring in school is recognised as being key to a successful model of partnership. However many issues can impact upon how successful a school's mentoring may be. This article is a case study, which considers how placing multiple trainees simultaneously in a school, can improve the quality of the experiences for all involved.

As part of TDA requirements for the recommendation of QTS all participants are required to undertake a week's placement in a second school during the spring term. In other regions it is the practice that the employing school, in discussion with their participant, find the school for this second placement.

For 2008/9 there are 18 Teach First Northwest participants working in Merseyside schools. Although LJMU is in its first year working with Teach First, the majority of staff working on the programme have extensive experience in working in ITT. The culture at LJMU is one of being proactive and we are constantly looking to improve and develop our provision. Thus, when at a mentor training session a number of mentors expressed concerns about finding the second school for their participants, the team conceived the idea of delivering this second placement by having a group of participants in the same school at the same time.

Introduction

Partnerships between schools and Higher Education Institutions (HEI) are not new. In 1992 the then Department for Education first prescribed the notion of what may be referred to as a 'current partnership' model, where schools would be given joint responsibility for the planning and management of training and assessment of students (DFE 1992). Most models of training now involve placing trainee teachers in schools for their teaching experience, where the school- based training is shared by a professional mentor and a subject mentor, and is supported by a University tutor.

Furlong *et al* (2000) discusses two models of partnership. Firstly a complementary approach, where schools and HEI's have separate but clearly defined roles in training or secondly a collaborative approach, where there is an integration of the contribution of all staff involved in the training. Neither approach was found to be widely used.

For the trainees themselves the success of any placement is a function of the quality of the mentoring they receive. Studies have shown there is great variation in the quality of mentoring. Brookes (2005 found that school mentors were often not adequately prepared for their role in implementing training programmes for trainee teachers. Evans *et al* (2006) highlighted a number of "issues and constraints" to partnerships models with a principle difficulty being the other roles within schools that mentors have, leading to real issues of time and availability.

One way to tackle such time considerations is to widen the scope of trained mentors in each partner school. At LJMU the Mentor Recognition Scheme is proving to be a very successful tool in promoting mentoring skills across the school workforce.

For a truly collaborative approach to partnership to be successful, it has to be viewed as a two way process with the partner school having clear benefits. Sometimes these benefits may not be clear to all in the school although Jones *et al* (2009) found that 80% of school mentors believed that working with ITT trainees generated opportunities for professional learning. This was supported through analysis of several case studies.

The study generated convincing evidence that for individual teachers mentoring trainee teachers can lead to professional renewal and re-orientation, opening up unexplored avenues for career progression and professional growth, and the affirmation of individual career trajectory, thereby affording teachers agency and ownership of their professional learning and renewal. (Jones *et al* 2008)

Using a single school for multiple placements is one way to deepen the impact of trainee teachers within a school. Simultaneously if can offer a way of widening the mentoring skills across staff. This short report records how a mutli-trainee placement not only had a major impact upon a school, but has provided rich benefits for all stakeholders in the collaborative partnership model.

Principal Aims for the Group Placement

In addition to the usual aims for a second placement, we felt that a grouped experience would offer a number of significant advantages;

- To enable participants to meet individually identified needs
- To permit Merseyside participants to share a common experience
- To promote opportunities for joint planning, peer observation and co-teaching
- To allow a school that has no experience of Teach First the opportunity to understand the rationale of TF and to appreciate the qualities of the participants
- To promote collaborative practice between LJMU, Shorefields and Teach First participants
- To give all participants the opportunities for working in multiracial school with a significant number of children not speaking English as their first language.

Shorefields Technology College

Shorefields is a specialist technology college of average size with significantly more boys than girls on roll. It serves an area with exceptionally high levels of social and economic deprivation. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is amongst the highest in the country. Almost half the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, a very high proportion when compared with the national average. A significant number of these are from Black British-African or other Black heritages. The proportion of students who join the school other than at the usual times is very high. A large number of recent arrivals come from Eastern Europe. About a quarter of the students speak English as an additional language: 45 are at the early stages of learning the language. Twenty-seven first languages are spoken by students. Due to its diverse intake, Shorefields, uniquely in Merseyside, employs several Bi-Lingual Teaching Assistants..
Shorefields are also seeking to have their own TF participants in September 2009.

"Shorefields is a good school where the needs and aspirations of each student are paramount. Characterised by racial integration and respect for diversity, it is a harmonious community to which staff and students alike are strongly committed" OFSTED 2008

Shorefields Technology College is a school that LJMU use extensively in training both our post-graduate and under-graduate ITT students. Shorefields has a very special relationship with LJMU and is an integral part of our secondary partnership. The team felt that given our knowledge and our links with Shorefields, it would be valuable to explore the opportunity to place a group of our participants there for their second placement.

During September and October 2008 LJMU staff met with the Headteacher and Associate Headteacher of Shorefields to discuss the potential of placing a group of Teach First participants within the school during the same week. The idea was met with great enthusiasm. Shorefields itself seek to have their own Teach First Participants in the future and additionally wish to give as many staff as possible the opportunity to work with training teachers. From an initial idea of placing a single group of participants in the school, grew the idea of placing all 18 of the Merseyside participants in two groups of 9, over two separate weeks in early January 2009. Care needed to be taken to minimise disruption for the employing schools but we felt that the concept had many advantages. For Shorefields there were a number of benefits to the idea. Firstly it would heighten the profile of Teach First within the school and help staff understand the Teach First rationale. Secondly it would provide many staff with the opportunity to act as a mentor thus enhancing their own professional development. Additionally they saw opportunities for enhancing the learning experience of their own students in a variety of different ways.

How the experience was organised

Following initial discussion within Teach First Northwest meetings it was decided that this unique approach to the second school should be an option for all participants and was not to be seen as compulsory. Feedback from Professional Mentors at our MSAG meeting was overwhelmingly in favour and they agreed to approach each of their own participants to see if they wished to take up this offer. Within a few days we had received confirmation from all 18 Merseyside participants that they would like to proceed with using Shorefields as their second school placement. Once all schools had agreed the final list, each participant was allocated a mentor from Shorefields who worked in their own specialism.

In the week prior to the two weeks of placement, a meeting was arranged for all Shorefields staff with LJMU tutors and the Regional Director of Teach First Northwest. The staff were given a briefing on Teach First plus a thorough overview of the two weeks ahead. A meeting followed this between all 18 participants and their mentors to discuss their week in Shorefields, share their targets and expectations and plan out what they were doing. This was very fruitful as it not only provided participant's an opportunity to meet their mentors before their first week, it gave them a chance to look at the school resources and facilities.

At the end of day 2 of each week, LJMU tutors met with each of the participants on an individual basis, to review their experiences so far and to discuss their agreed plans for the remainder of the week. Further advice was given to ensure that each participant was maximising their opportunities within the school and would, by the end of the week, be able to meet their initial targets. Also, at the end of each week, LJMU tutors visited the participants to reflect on their experiences, prior to them returning to their own school.

Feedback from Teach First Tutors

Tutors identified a number of key successes. Firstly the opportunity that all participants had to meet their mentors and find out what they would be doing in advance of the first morning was felt to be a huge bonus. Not only did they know the staff they were working with in advance, they knew what classes they would be in, they could share their individual targets prior to the week, which in turn assisted in producing an individualised timetable for the week. Thus participants could immerse themselves in the experience from the first morning. The professional discourse evident from this initial visit lay the foundations for a really successful experience. It was clear that there was a collaborative synergy between the Teach First participants and their school mentors

Participants experienced the school behaviour management policy and were pleased to be able to observe a variety of behaviour strategies. Some took specific ideas back to their own schools. We feel it is valuable for participants to gain such experiences as it will enhance their understanding of different school systems which we feel is an important part of leadership development.

Prior concern was raised about some participants who may feel uncomfortable teaching in front of peers and perhaps exposing weaknesses. It was for this reason that we insisted that each individual would agree their timetable with their own mentor and that peer observation was not a compulsory element. As it turned out, such worries were unfounded and all actually partook in either observation of peers or paired teaching or both. Infact this element of the experience was deemed to be one of the most positive of all.

However the greatest strength of the placement from the tutors perspective was the opportunity all participants had to reflect on their own teaching, not only in discussions with their own mentors but more importantly with each other. Often in the day-to-day bustle of a full teaching load time for such reflection is limited and certainly there is no opportunity to reflect on individual lessons with eight other participants.

Feedback from TF Participants

All participants enjoyed the week experience and felt they benefited from it. Many took back to their own schools new ideas in such areas as assessment, levelling lessons, behaviour management strategies and curriculum ideas for their own subject. They felt that the timing of the placement worked well and would recommend the experience be kept for future years.

Other feedback can be summarised as follows;

- Huge benefits of being able to share experience which helped to build confidence.
- Lesson observations were found to be very beneficial.
- Team teaching with other participants was felt to be a rewarding experience.
- Participants were able to try out a range of ideas without worry.
- Mentors across the school were hugely supportive and helpful

There was no negative feedback, however one did comment that there simply wasn't enough time to do everything they wanted. Another thought that for next year we may consider repeating the same idea but in a more academic institution.

"Being able to work with such a diversity of students was the most enjoyable experience. It has caused me to raise expectations for my own students as I have been able to observe such good behaviour and determination from students who have come from much more difficult backgrounds than those I teach". (Teach First participant)

Feedback from TF School Mentors

Mentors felt that the placement worked well for all parties and were grateful for LJMU taking this initiative. All agreed it was well organised and that their participants obtained a great deal from it. They were pleased that they did not have the job of finding the placements themselves principally due to the perceived additional time that would be needed. They felt that the event was held at the right time of the year which minimised pressure for the participant. A number commented that participants returned refreshed and full of renewed enthusiasm.

Mentors felt that participants returned to their school with a different perspective and even greater enthusiasm. Not only was the EAL standard consistently referred to as being a useful part of the experience, mentors felt that their participants benefitted from observing different learning strategies and behaviour management techniques used by different teachers. In short they gained confidence.

Feedback from Shorefields Technology School

(evidence gathered from discussions with staff at school and from questionnaire completed at the end of the two week experience)

The overwhelming feedback from the teachers and mentors at Shorefields related to the nature and quality of the collaboration and professional partnership which was evident, developed and enhanced throughout the experience. The quality of the participants permitted a "*level of professional reflection that one does not witness with other ITT students*". Not only did the experience promote opportunities for individual staff to continuously reflect upon their own practice, there were what was described as "*significant gains*" for many staff in terms of their own skills and pedagogy.

The fact that all participants came in prepared for their week with clear targets and specific questions, ensured that mentors could match experiences to individual needs. This led to a truly professional dialogue between equals with a real exchange of ideas.

One of the reasons Shorefields wanted to hold this experience was to permit more staff to become involved in mentoring. All staff who were identified as mentors were volunteers and took to their task with enthusiasm. This was critical in the success of the experience. Additionally, Shorefields hoped to educate staff about the nature of Teach First in anticipation of becoming a TF school next year. By the end of the two weeks it was felt that all staff had a better idea of what Teach First can offer their school.

Having 9 participants in each week gave a real sense of "an event" throughout the school but this was particularly so for the children. The dynamic of such a large group being in together, had a significant impact on teaching and learning. All children, at some point in the week, were able to work with a TF participant. Children are used to many visitors in to their class, but the professionalism and experience of the TF participants meant that in all sessions there was a "*sense of additionally rather than more of the same*".

One unexpected result of having participants together in a single cohort was how it fostered departmental discussion. Different departments started talking to each other about how they were employing their TF participants. It also led to more thought from staff about cross-curricular links.

There is no doubt that having so many participants simultaneously in a school presents certain challenges not least in the logistics of the staffroom. However, the school feel that these challenges are not significant compared to many positive aspects of the experience.

TEACH FIRST IN SHOREFIELDS

An overview of the Teach First experience is provided at Shorefields own website ***http://www.shorefields.com/teachfirst.html***

Reflection on the Experience

It is clear that the original principal aims of the idea were met. Using Shorefields allowed all participants to gain a unique insight into the issues of EAL. For some participants it would not have been possible to gain such experiences within their own school. Nevertheless, even without this aspect, it is believed that the Shorefields group placement had many benefits not only for participants, but for Teach First, the employing schools, LJMU, and Shorefields itself.

Participants found the whole experience very rewarding, not only in terms of their teaching but also for the opportunities provided to work, plan and teach together. It also allowed each participant's individual needs to be discussed in advance and addressed in the placement. The input of the tutors during the teaching weeks assisted in facilitating this. The participants returned to their employing school with renewed enthusiasm and a range of new ideas.

The experience allowed us the opportunity to 'showcase' the Teach First participants and to promote the Teach First ethos. It is a very positive driver for the recruitment of future Teach First schools. The employing schools were grateful that the organisation of the second school week was done for them. All commented on how well organised it was and that "pressure was taken off them". They also agreed that the experience was useful in the professional development of their participants.

For LJMU the Shorefields placement contributed to our commitment to partnership enhancement. It also served to raise the profile of Teach First across the city. Finally, Shorefields school itself benefited through the enhancement of the learning experience for the children and the professional development opportunities the experience offered their staff.

The Future

We believe that this model for a second placement could be extended further in the future… However we are acutely aware that a great deal of the success of these two weeks was due to the commitment of the leadership of Shorefields and the motivation and input from not only the teaching staff but also the support staff. To repeat the experience at a different school would require similar commitment from all staff involved.

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Constructivism and sports coaching: A case study of the challenges and difficulties associated with model based instruction

Simon Roberts

Abstract

Using constructivist learning theory and Windschitl's four dimensional model of constructivist dilemmas in practice (*conceptual dilemmas, pedagogical dilemmas, cultural dilemmas, and political dilemmas*) this study examines the challenges and difficulties experienced by a number of participation sports coaches as they implemented model based instruction principles into an annual training programme for the first time.

Introduction

Despite the emergence of constructivism as a recognised learning theory in the 1980's and 1990's its development has been largely accredited to the earlier work of Dewey, Piaget and Vygotsky (Fosnot, 1996; Phillips, 1995). By adopting a constructivist theoretical perspective, this study examines sports coaches' experiences of their learning and development as a process by which they engage with their physical and social environment (Fosnot, 1996). Specifically, this includes identifying changes of their knowledge of model based instruction (Metzler, 2005) by drawing on previous experiences, existing knowledge, coaching experience and social interactions (Rovegno, 1998). In an attempt to capture the lived experiences of these coaches in their practice environment a four dimensional model representing the dilemmas of constructivist orientated delivery will be utilised (Windschitl, 2002).

The four frames of reference include

(1) Conceptual dilemmas;

(2) Pedagogical dilemmas;

(3) Cultural dilemmas;

(4) Political dilemmas.

Conceptual dilemmas have been defined as the "teachers' attempts to understand the philosophical, psychological and epistemological underpinnings of constructivism" (Windschitl, 2002, p. 132). For many practitioners constructivism and its theory of learning poses many potential challenges, in particular, its fundamentally different instructional approach which for many teachers may actually be incongruous to the educational model personally experienced whilst a pupil in school (Cobb & Yackel, 1996). Pedagogic dilemmas associated with the delivery of constructivist principles include inter alia; adopting effective facilitation approaches, developing in-depth understanding of the subject content and allowing learners to think for themselves (Windschitl, 2002). According to Windschitl (2002) the delivery of constructivist

principles requires the practitioner to employ a series of effective strategies to support learners in problem-based inquiry. It has been reported that radical shifts in the learning environment involve a dramatic change in the relationship between teacher and learner, shifting from the traditional direct instructional approach to a relationship which is more interactive, complex and unpredictable (Darling-Hammond, 1996). Cultural dilemmas materialise as a consequence of the changing role of the teacher and the difficulties associated with maintaining beliefs and orientations congruent to constructivist principles (Windschitl, 2002). Finally, Political dilemmas involve opposition from interested parties (e.g. parents, other coaches, administrators) when accepted or traditional norms, values and practices are questioned and ultimately changed.

In the last decade a number of important studies have reported the difficulties and challenges of learning and implementing model based instruction (Curtner-Smith & Sofo, 2004; McCaughtry, *et al*., 2004; McMahon & MacPhail, 2007; Rovegno 1993; Rovegno & Bandhauer, 1997). Findings from these studies have highlighted the complexities and difficulties associated with learning and adopting alternative curricula approaches. For instance, previous research on learning to teach from a tactical games perspective have illustrated how teachers often adopt episodic approaches to planning lessons and often overlook the connections which exist between new and old curriculum models (Rovegno, 1993; 1998). In addition, already deep-rooted teaching orientations, a lack of support from teaching mentors and the learning environments have all been cited as potential barriers to learning new curricular and constructivist oriented teaching approaches (McCaughtry *et al*., 2004; Rovegno, 1998; Rovegno, 2003). Moreover, it has been suggested that constructivist teaching approaches are complex and many teachers find difficulty adapting and indeed adopting constructivist principles into their pedagogical repertoire (Gordon, 2009). In particular, less experienced teachers find difficulty implementing this form of instruction because of the various pedagogical demands, which include managing pupil interaction, understanding pedagogic content and assessing pupil knowledge (Windschitl, 2002).

Therefore the purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of five recently qualified England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) cricket coaches as they implemented constructivist principles into their coaching pedagogy for the first time. The research question which guided the inquiry was; what were the challenges, difficulties, dilemmas and barriers experienced by the coaches while adopting constructivist principles into their coaching practice?

Methodology

In order to capture the real life phenomenon of the participants and the qualitative nature of the inquiry this study adopted a descriptive case study design (Yin, 2003). This allowed the researcher the flexibility to combine data collection and analysis and probe the interrelationship between the data and the research participants by constantly addressing unanswered questions and identifying new ideas. As Hammersley and Smith (1995, p. 24) argue 'research design should be a reflexive process which operates throughout every stage of a project'. By adopting a descriptive case study design it was possible to ask 'how' and 'why' questions and maintain an illustration of events in a specific context (Yin, 2003).

Participants

The coaches recruited for this case study were purposively sampled (Bowling, 1997) through my own role as an accredited ECB coach education tutor and my involvement with the coaches in an earlier investigation (Roberts, 2007). The coaches in this case study have all successfully completed the ECB UKCC 2 award and initial contact was

made during the delivery of this award in February 2007 [N.B. The author was not involved in the delivery of this award but conducted a systematic observation of its delivery (Roberts, 2007)]. The coaches were approached initially because of their individual interest in alternative coaching approaches and an eagerness to incorporate constructivist principles into their current coaching practice. Consequently five male participation cricket coaches attached to a cricket club located in the north-west of England agreed to participate in the study.

All of the coaches provided written informed consent and the local university ethics board provided permission for the study to take place. To protect the true identity of the participants the real names of the coaches have been replaced with pseudonyms.

All of the coaches (Adam, Ben, Colin, David and Evan) are experienced cricket coaches and have collectively coached cricket in various capacities for approximately 45 years. All of the coaches have extensive playing backgrounds and but for one of the coaches (David) they are still actively playing cricket. Although the coaches in this small case study are experienced and have coached youth cricketers for a number of years, they operate without a formal coaching contract and are not routinely measured against performance outputs and consequently are best described as participation coaches (Lyle, 2002). Due to the small sample size care must be taken in generalising the findings from this case study to similar coaching populations and indeed to other sports currently accredited with UKCC endorsement. Prior to the case study commencing all the coaches indicated a preference for the traditional direct instruction (skill-drill) coaching approach and their only previous experience of alternative coaching pedagogy was during the completion of the ECB UKCC 2 award.

Intervention procedure

All of the coaches were requested to adopt constructivist principles and incorporate these into an annual youth cricket training programme. In order to maintain a level of congruency with a constructivist approach each coach was provided with a planning booklet which included the following headings:

(1) modified game forms;
(2) game appreciation;
(3) tactical development;
(4) decision making; and
(5) technical development.

Each coach was encouraged to outline under each heading the learning objectives, and learning outcomes and specifically how the practical content would accurately reflect selected constructivist principles. Each coach was also requested to forward an electronic copy of the plan to the author prior to each coaching session. This procedure had a number of potential benefits. Firstly, it acted as a quality assurance mechanism, whereby the author could monitor the coaches' interpretation of constructivism and record the appropriateness of the planned activities. Secondly, it acted as a support network for the coaches. The regular communication via e-mail regarding the suitability of activities and the occasional suggestions made by the author generated a forum where ideas could be shared and developed.

Due to the seasonal nature of cricket in the UK the annual training programme included indoor coaching sessions (March 07 – April 07 and January 08 – March 08), and outdoor coaching sessions (May 07-August 07). The coaches were instructed to follow the guidelines of constructivism outlined in the ECB UKCC 2 Coach Handbook and the ECB resource DVD 'Wings to Fly' (2006). The coaches were permitted to coach technical elements but only if they believed it was possible for the technical

intervention to be transferable into the game and developmentally appropriate in its nature. All of the coaches agreed to provide an annual coaching plan outlining where constructivist principles were to be adopted. Finally, at the end of every coaching session each coach was requested to complete a coaching evaluation form. The purpose of this was three-fold, firstly to aid and encourage reflection; secondly to provide an opportunity for the coaches to critique the success of the activities in relation to the overall coaching objectives and thirdly, the qualitative comments outlined on the evaluation forms would be subject to analysis. The following questions were provided as exemplars to guide the coaches in this process.

1. What was really good about the session?
2. What was not so good about the session?
3. How would you improve the session?
4. What did the players learn?
5. How did the session supplement constructivist principles?
6. Think about the games you included. Can they be improved? (Kidman, 2005).

Data collection and analysis

In total the coaches delivered 110 coaching sessions between March 2007 and March 2008. The breakdown of delivered coaching sessions was a low of 15 sessions (Evan) to a high of 26 sessions (David). Data collection included 20 in-depth one-to-one interviews, using a questioning format similar to one previously adopted in a study by Light (2004) and the submission of 110 personal evaluation forms. The interview format adopted by Light (2004) in his study of elite coaches presented a framework of constructivist dilemmas congruent to the four dimensional constructivist dilemmas of practice model identified previously by Windschitl (2002).

Interviews

The interview format was loosely structured around six core questions. In addition to the six core questions, written qualitative comments extracted from the individual evaluation forms were also introduced into the interview in order to provide the coaches with the opportunity to expand and clarify comments which were previously unclear or ambiguous to the author. The opening question focused on coaching style and coaching philosophy (*Conceptual dilemmas*) and the congruence between constructivist principles and their previous coaching orientation, the second and third questions focused on the coaches specific experiences of constructivism and in particular the difficulties and the challenges (*Pedagogic dilemmas*) of adopting constructivist principles. The fourth question was aimed more towards to the effects on the performers (*Cultural dilemmas*) and in particular how the performers were responding to selected constructivist principles. The fifth question was reflective in nature and required the coaches to consider improvements they would incorporate into their coaching practice and the final question encouraged the coaches to consider the role of the formalised coach education programme (Political dilemmas) in preparing them to coach and any difficulties they encountered. All of the 20 interviews were recorded using an Olympus (WS-300M) digital voice recorder and transcribed verbatim by the author into Microsoft Word rich text. Each coach was interviewed on four separate occasions throughout the duration of the study; the interviews were conducted at mutually agreed locations and included the respondent's place of work and various cricket club locations.

The average interview lasted approximately 60 minutes; the shortest interview was recorded at 47 minutes with the highest 118 minutes. Each transcript was initially proof read by the interviewer and then forwarded to the

interviewees for member checking. Aside from some minor grammatical and interpretation errors the transcripts were deemed to be accurate records of the interviews.

Data analysis

All of the interview transcripts were computed into an analysis software programme (Nudist NVivo) and the constant comparative method of analysing data (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) was applied to selected notes and paragraphs. In addition, selected notes that were not deliberately introduced through the questions, but which emerged within the transcripts and the 110 coaching evaluation forms were also input into the analysis software programme and allocated descriptive codes. In order to generate an accurate description of the data, topic coding (Morse & Richards, 2002) was applied to emerging labels and categories. The responses across all the coaches were then analysed to identify themes specific to the challenges and difficulties associated with learning and delivering selected constructivist principles. Finally, the emerging themes and categories generated by the data were subject to further data generation and tested against the four dimensional model of constructivism in practice (Windschitl, 2002) and formal constructivist learning theory. Exemplar extracts from the interviews which effectively highlighted these themes are identified for use within the discussion.

Results and Discussion

The *Pedagogic dilemmas* associated with learning constructivist pedagogy included; the use of a questioning strategy, insufficient pedagogic content knowledge, and gaining access to appropriate support material. The *Conceptual dilemmas* included maintaining a 'true' constructivist focus. The *Cultural dilemmas* faced by the coaches included tensions within the coach-player relationship. Finally, the Political dilemmas suggested the NGB could provide more guidance on the use of constructivism and in particular regular professional development opportunities. Although generally satisfied with the ECB UKCC 2 the coaches were in retrospect disappointed with the practical examples of the constructivist modules and were concerned constructivism was not a shared philosophy amongst the core coach education tutor team.

Pedagogic Dilemmas

The questioning strategy was commented on extensively by all the coaches as a constructivist strategy which they found desperately difficult and generated a number of issues and concerns. This particular protocol contributed more than any other to restrict the effectiveness of the coaches instructional delivery. The difficulties encountered with the use of questioning tentatively suggest that in order to adopt this approach, a good in-depth understanding of the game is necessary. Indeed, previous research from the field of physical education suggest posing purposeful questions can be problematic, as accurate observations of the game are required, and it is suggested these skills are more likely to be adopted by expert or experienced practitioners (Howarth, 2005). Moreover, the difficulties associated with the questioning technique by the coaches in this study does provide some support to the argument presented by Wright & Forrest (2007) that further examples of practical questioning techniques need to be incorporated into the research literature to support and guide practitioners.

Insufficient Pedagogical Content Knowledge

The coaches involved in this study were not expert coaches or indeed teachers of physical education and consequently relied on pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) (Shulman, 1987) developed solely through previous playing experiences and observations of fellow coaches.

Due to the lack of PCK, an initial preference for coaching cricket from a technical perspective and due the technical nature of the game of cricket, it is perhaps not surprising that the transition to a more player centred and constructivist orientation was indeed problematic. Dilemmas over insufficient PCK have been highlighted in previous studies with teachers of physical education (Rovegno, 1998) and as such constructivism can be considered much more demanding than the traditional didactic skill-drill approach. The coaches in this study all commented on their ability to diagnose problems associated with technique but often found difficulty with the strategic and tactical elements of games play. This draws similar parallels with Rovegno's study (1998) in which the teachers developed their PCK through carefully watching the children's responses to various tasks. The coaches involved in this study may well have benefited from sustained and agreed areas of observation so their knowledge and understanding of the game could be enhanced. However, the coaches reported difficulty in observing for long periods as they were concerned this may be perceived as 'lacking interest'. In this regard, coaching scholars have argued observation may well be mis-interpreted as the coach being 'off-task' (Jones, Housner & Kornspan, 1997). Alternatively, disciplined observation may also involve the mind thinking in complex and highly conscious operations and may actually involve the coach actively involved in reflective activity and 'reflecting-in-action' (Schon, 1983).

Cultural dilemmas

Coach/Player Relationships

The ability to adopt a 'good' questioning strategy and incorporate legitimate constructivist approaches was clearly a frustration for most of the coaches in this study and it appeared to generate tension in the relationship between the coach and the player. Initially, the coaches found a constructivist approach compromised their position of 'authority' and were reluctant to involve the players in decision making and generally 'pushed' information onto them. David in particular had an interesting response from one of his players while attempting to empower one of his players in a small-sided game.

> Basically I had set up the game and it was going okay, I decided to 'freeze' the action and ask the batter a question relating to the field placing. I think my question was,' where is the best place to hit the ball to guarantee two runs'? The player's response was 'why don't you know'? I felt at this stage as though I was losing control and a little bit of credibility. (emphasis added)

The NGB's responsible for coach education courses in particular, should ensure appropriate guidance is provided on the effective use of questioning and inquiry related principles, and the importance of the coach communicating what they are doing and why they are moving away from commonly accepted modes of instruction. This should involve moving beyond not only the pedagogic requirements of a questioning strategy, but also the potentially risky nature of adopting alternative instructional approaches. In the interview with David following this incident he revealed how it became increasingly difficult to ask the 'right' question and how he feared losing the respect of the players.

Conceptual dilemmas

Maintaining a 'constructivist' instructional approach

Constructivism places the player at the centre of the learning process with the coach relegated to a position off 'centre-stage' (Alexander *et al*., 1996, p. 24). Previous studies conducted with teachers of physical education have suggested this re-positioning off 'centre-stage' can be problematic, as it may not be congruent with an

already well established teaching philosophy and orientation, such as, a didactic direct instructional approach (Butler, 2006; McCaughtry *et al*., 2004; Rovegno, 2003). Consequently, a number of studies have reported teachers reverting back to teaching from a technical focus and opposing the tactical nature of model based instruction (Brooker *et al*.,2000; McNeill *et al*., 2004). The findings of this study however, suggest this was not necessarily the case, and a retreat to a more direct technical orientation was based purely on a lack of appropriate PCK (Shulman, 1987) and appropriate resource material, rather than a philosophical opposition to the tactical model *per se*. All of the coaches were consistent in their assessments of the difficulties associated with maintaining a constructivist focus throughout the training programme

Political dilemmas

Resources and continued professional development

The shortage of available up-to-date practical constructivist coaching resources specific to cricket was another anxiety shared by the coaches. Despite, a variety of resources included in the ECB UKCC 2, such as laminated A5 coaching cards with a number of modified games, a resource DVD and a coaching handbook, the coaches felt as though the ECB could be doing more to support them in their attempts to coach using alternative pedagogic approaches.

The availability of practical esources is unquestionably a valid one, to the author's knowledge Mitchell, Oslin and Griffin (2006) is the only practitioner based text which provides practical approaches to coaching from a constructivist perspective. Although there are a wide variety of academic research texts outlining previous research and theory surrounding constructivism there is, however, a shortage of available practical resource guides in particular for striking and fielding games such as cricket. A possible solution to this problem may be in the adoption of appropriate continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for both coach education teams and coaches jointly co-ordinated by experienced teachers or colleagues in Higher Education Institutes (HEI) familiar with the practical and theoretical application of constructivist approaches. If the content of coach education courses are to continue with the inclusion of essentially educational concepts, then it would appear logical that greater collaboration exists between HEI's, teachers of physical education and NGB's. Currently, HEI's have been consulted over specialist input at UKCC levels 4/5, where individual NGB's perceive their coach education teams have insufficient knowledge in specific areas (Taylor and Garratt, 2008). The evidence from this particular study is that extending this to UKCC levels 2/3 may also be worthy of consideration.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this case study was to illustrate the challenges, dilemmas and difficulties experienced by five participation cricket coaches as they incorporated constructivist principles into their coaching practice for the first time. The findings from this study generally supports the previous research conducted with teachers of physical education faced with implementing constructivist principles for the first time. Furthermore, this study highlights the complexities which are involved with learning and implementing alternative pedagogies. Coach education teams therefore need to consider the difficulties associated with learning a new pedagogic approach and in particular avoid over simplifying a typically complex process. This should include more guidance on the effective use of questioning as well as support in maintaining a 'true' tactical focus. Extending the role of HEI's into the delivery of selected UKCC 2/3 modules may be worthy of further consideration. A failure to address these concerns may regrettably involve coaches rejecting alternative, player centred pedagogies

and instead rely solely on traditional skill-drill approaches, which ultimately may not serve the interests of the players or the long term development of the coach.

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Great teachers: how shall we know them?

Carol Maynard and Clare Milsom

Introduction

Is it possible to identify and measure great teaching? Ostensibly there are a range of measures and initiatives that should help us evidence quality. The UK Professional Standards Framework is a fairly gentle set of sector standards that define criteria related to different roles. These standards are not compulsory across the sector and even in Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) where there is a well developed Continuing Professional Development programme framework take up? is inconsistent and attendance and achievement unmonitored. Over the last 10 years enhancement of the student experience has been central to LJMU's Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy. So, how is our institution able to recognise great teaching via its strategies? This paper will discuss some of the current influences and mechanisms for identifying and recognising great teaching and will consider some recommendations for how we may enhance these strategies further within LJMU.

The Higher Education Academy National Teaching Fellowship Scheme is an established means for celebrating excellent teachers. We currently have four (many other institutions have more). This does not mean that we don't have excellent teachers; perhaps we are not strategic enough in spotting them and supporting their development. This year Liverpool Students' Union (LSU) launches the 'outstanding teacher award' for the first time students nominated '*the individual who is the very best example of teaching at LJMU; a teacher who is consistently excellent and inspires student to learn*' (LSU website). The final measure that is used to directly measure performance is the National Student Survey. In the absence of other mechanisms to measure teaching quality, student evaluation of staff teaching, module delivery and student satisfaction are used as a proxy for general teacher effectiveness. How appropriate are such measures? Schuck *et al*. (2008) emphasize the importance of an internal accountability in preference to the using student surveys to measure teaching quality. They challenge the perceived wisdom that '*student views of education accurately capture the essence of good teaching*' (p.543).

Student evaluations of teaching

As the use of student evaluations of teaching has become more pervasive with results used to directly inform promotion and tenure (Spooren and Mortleman 2006), extensive empirical research has followed. Results demonstrate that student satisfaction responses are influenced by a range of factors unrelated to the quality of teaching and effective learning. In effect, student ratings are sensitive to a number of factors that they are not intended to measure. Non instructional biasing causes and can be grouped into student, course and tutor related factors.

Student-related

Student grade expectations and achievement are the most influential factors in student evaluations. This has led to the grading leniency hypothesis; the idea that students give higher ratings to instructors who grade more leniently. Empirical research has both partially refuted and supported the hypothesis. Often the data and context are too narrow to allow extrapolation or generalisation of results. However, there is sufficient evidence to support the theory that average grade is a significant predictor of instructor ratings (Blackhart *et al*. 2006) with

easy-going markers more likely to be given higher ratings in student evaluations. Related to this is the bias associated with the expected grade and what is rather dramatically termed as 'revenge in student evaluation of teaching' Boysen (2008, p:218). Boysen (2008) demonstrated that even if few students were acknowledging revenge or hard grading as a reason for low evaluations experimental data manipulation supported the notion that a lower than expected grade is associated with low ratings. Although it is accepted by Boysen (2008) that revenge was one of the less important factors in predicating students evaluations. Finally in terms of overall grade Spooren and Mortleman (2006) conclude that the final grade of a student has a significant impact on evaluations stating 'better students (in terms of higher grades over all courses) give higher ratings on teacher effectiveness on a particular course. ' (p.211). Obviously grade-related factors are interrelated and the findings of Spooren and Mortleman (2006) partly refute the grading leniency hypothesis as the overall grade moderate the relationship.

Filak and Sheldon (2003) examined need satisfaction as a predictor of positive student course evaluations. In an effort to find out the main driving force behind evaluations the autonomy supportiveness of the teacher was analysed as this was considered to be 'very important in maximal learning, growth and creativity of students', (p.236). Students' feelings of competence and autonomy were significant predictors of both course and teacher evaluations. However, as students' evaluation of class level factors revealed that positive feelings of competence and autonomy were greater in smaller classes. This leads onto the second group of biasing factors in student evaluations, those that are related to the course.

Course-related

Class size, course difficulty and workload have all been found to have significant influence on student evaluations. Class size has an indirect impact on ratings. Spooren and Mortleman (2006) identify a relationship between overall grade and class size. Filak and Sheldon (2003) conclude that student need satisfaction is greater in smaller classes. Zabaleta (2007) found that grades increased in small classes, less than 17 but found no direct relationship between class size and student ratings. Other course-related biasing factors include workload and course difficulty. Greenwald and Gilmore (1997) investigated the influence of grades and course workloads on student evaluations. Their findings support the grading leniency hypothesis in that courses that gave higher grades were better liked but they also found that courses that gave higher grades had lower workloads. Indicating the influence that workload has on student ratings. Martin (1998) identifies 13 separated course-related factors that influence ratings. Of these 'difficulty' has the greatest influence. He presents a compelling argument against using student opinions to evaluate teaching effectiveness. Of greatest concern is the comparison and ranking of faculty. He states *'ranking promotes competition, destroys cooperation and accomplishes nothing positive'* (p.15). Martin (1998, p.15) defines leadership as *'providing an environment where people see themselves as part of a system and are motivated to help each other to optimise the system'.*

Tutor-related

Finally the most controversial aspect of bias in student evaluations is the influence of the teacher on student evaluations. Reassuringly empirical research confirms the existence of an underlying or higher order factor that has been termed teacher professionalism. Spoore and Mortleman (2006, p.211) state that *'it seems to be the case that teachers who build up and organise their*

course in a professional and well considered way receive higher ratings on several domains of the course as they are considered 'professional teachers' by their students'. Less reassuring are the findings of Zableta (2008) who concludes that *'inexperienced instructors are not far behind the rest of instructors in receiving positive student evaluations* (p.60). Other tutor-related characteristics that influence students ratings include; charisma, warmth, physical attractiveness, age and gender. Charisma has been quantified as accounting for 69% of the variation in lecturer ability in student evaluations of teaching (Shevlin *et al*.2000) questioning the *'utility of using information from such scales since the attribute of charisma is having a central trait effect on student evaluations'* (p.p402). It has also been demonstrated empirically that when a professor shows *'the full array of warmth-inducing behaviours'* (Best and Addison 2000, p.60) student evaluations are more favourable. Physical attractiveness correlates significantly with the perceived quality of the professor (Bonds-Raacke and Raacke 2007). Zablaleta (2008) showed that the variable 'age' was highly significant for in the prediction of grades and evaluations. Of concern is that although older staff (55 to 65) tended to give higher grades the age group received the lowest evaluations. Early studies on influences on student ratings are more analytical of gender, there is less recent research in this area. However, Hobson and Talbot (2001) state that *'an interaction effect appears to exist between students and instructor's sex/gender-role orientation but it is not clearly documented'.*

Other evaluative methods - including what does the research say?

If not student evaluations then how can we recognise great teaching? At one extreme Barnett (1997, p.163) recommends that "*the term 'teaching' is best abandoned altogether*". In his view Higher Education is the "*highest form of human development*" (Barnett Ibid: p.162) concerned with the development of critical people able to bring about a learning society. Imploring tertiary education to "jettison the notion" of teaching, Barnett (1997, p.163) as it is so curtailed and institutionalised he recommends a three- pronged approach; critical reason, critical self-reflection and critical action. He concludes it is the task of the teacher to construct a range of situations where the critical life in all its demands can be sustained, in his terms 'highest learning', Barnett(1997, p.164).

Other methods support the identification of teachers that adopt a genuinely student-focused approach. That is, tutors that are aware of students needs and how they learn. Staff who consider students as partners in learning, choosing how they are taught and assessed. Students playing an active role in programme evaluation, providing an authentic representation of the student voice. There is a degree of congruence between researchers in this area with a continuum of views. Entwistle (2009) perhaps takes a middle ground and recognises that some teacher focus is important e.g. clarity, pace, level and structure which could be referred to as the craft of teaching whilst emphasising that these things mean nothing without strategies for promoting deep learning. Underlining the permanence of the student learning experience stating *'Done well, university teaching can help students to acquire a way of thinking and learning that is indelible…done badly, it can alienate them from the whole idea of learning'.* (Entwistle, 2009, p.4)

D'Andrea and Gosling (2005), Knight (2002), Kreber (2005), Shulman (2003) and Skelton (2009) along with many others emphasise that great teaching in Higher Education is scholarly. Research informing our teaching and researching our teaching sets HE aside from other educational sectors. An academic approach

however can be very isolating causing HE teachers to alienate themselves from the support of a collegial learning community. *'We close the classroom door and experience pedagogical solitude whereas in our life as scholars we are members of active communities (where we) exchange our findings, and methods and our excuses'*. (Shulman, 1993, p.6). Macfarlane (2003) proposes that we should perhaps subscribe to a set of virtues, potentially attributes for teachers. These include respectfulness, sensitivity, pride, courage, fairness, openness, restraint and collegiality.

Conclusion

The literature on the validity of student evaluations is vast. Rather than scrutinising the use and misuse of student evaluations we need to establish our own methods for identifying great teaching that cannot be reduced to rankings and heroes but is drawn from a supportive and supported environment where best practice can be shared and allowed to flourish. Schuck *et al*. (2008, p.545) state the need for a '*broader understanding of teaching quality and better ways of ascertaining such quality than the use of student surveys… internal accountability leads to professional responsibility far more than an externally driven requirement*'. Great teaching is about great learning. As professional teachers we should develop strategies to recognise and share great learning environments. '*We should not look for teaching excellence as an essence within heroic individuals – it resides in the material conditions that underpin teaching quality*' Skelton (2009, p.110). It is our professional responsibility to make great teaching the aspiration and achievement of Liverpool John Moore University.

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Using reciprocal peer feedback to encourage assessment as learning: an exploration of students' views of the experience

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Abstract

This paper examines the rationale for the introduction of a staged assessment process incorporating peer feedback (Falchikov, 2001) to an existing undergraduate assignment. The study explores the students' views and perceptions of the assessment experience and presents findings which indicate that it was received positively by the majority. Key findings include evidence of enhanced understanding of the subject matter and the task, engagement in deeper approaches to learning (Ramsden, 2003) and greater self-regulation of learning (Nicol and MacFarlane-Dick, 2006) as a result of the approach. Some reservations were expressed regarding the ability and willingness of students to provide critical feedback which warrant further consideration.

Introduction

The importance of providing students with good quality, timely feedback on their work is widely recognised (e.g. Black and William, 1998; Yorke, 2003; Race, 1995) and teachers in higher education strive to provide this, despite the tensions that exist due to increasing student numbers and the corresponding workload demands placed on staff. Yorke (2003) poses two key questions in relation to feedback: is it best quality and does it lead to changes in student behaviour?

In order for assessment to bring about learning, Black and William (1998) place the student at the centre of all feedback processes. They highlight the importance of students' active involvement in constructing understanding of the process and their performance, then applying this to their learning to bring about improvement. This feedback process is underpinned by the principles identified by Sadler (1989). The student must know the standard being aimed for, be able to compare their current performance with this goal and, most importantly, must know how to close the gap between their current and desired performance. The typical model of assessment in higher education poses a number of barriers to achieving this ideal.

Before feedback can be used to regulate students' learning strategies and performance, they have to be given opportunity to construct an understanding of it (Ivanic *et al*, 2000; Higgins *et al*, 2001; Nicol and MacFarlane-Dick, 2006). In the majority of instances, it is not feasible to provide individual tutorials with students to support them in doing this. Without this opportunity for dialogue, there is ambiguity surrounding students' interaction with the feedback.

Additionally, the nature of the typical assessment cycle in higher education means that the feedback generated from the summative

assessment of a taught module is often received by the students in its latter stages or after it has finished, thus making it problematic to use the feedback directly to close the gap between their actual and desired performance. In the absence of the opportunity to use the feedback to improve the same piece of work, Boud (2000) espouses that there is no way of knowing whether it has been effective.

The nature of the assessment task can exert a backwash effect on learning (Boud *et al*, 1999) when students exhibit a surface approach to learning by focusing on subjects that are assessed at the expense of others (e.g. Ramsden, 2003). This undermines the development of students as autonomous learners and, as Boud (1990) argues, appears to be at odds with the aims of higher education.

This paper shares the findings of a small-scale qualitative study in which second year undergraduate Primary Education students engaged in an assessment task designed to incorporate some of the principles for good feedback practice in an attempt to provide more feedback at a point in the assessment process which allowed students opportunity to construct an understanding of it and respond to it in their subsequent work, whilst encouraging positive changes in their learning behaviour. Importantly, the design of the assessment process was intended not to create any additional workload for staff.

To counteract the lack of opportunity for students to act on feedback, Hounsell (2004) suggests placing greater emphasis on providing feedback on work-in-progress to support students in planning how to improve subsequent work. Although this is desirable, the workload implications for teaching staff would make this unrealistic when working with large cohorts. Unless it was also linked to developing greater independence in students' learning behaviours, it would prolong, or perhaps even increase, students' dependence on teachers.

From synthesis of the literature, Nicol and MacFarlane-Dick (2006) provide a model for the development of skills of self-regulated learning, in response to evidence that such learners are more effective and less dependent on teacher support (Zimmerman and Schunk, 2001). They present principles for good feedback practice that incorporate facilitating the recommendations of Sadler (1989): for students to have a clear understanding of the expected standards, high quality feedback about current performance and opportunities to close the gap between them. They also recommend teacher and peer dialogue around learning, development of self-assessment and positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem to encourage perseverance.

Peer assessment is a strategy that has been employed successfully to meet this need (e.g. Falchikov, 1986; Boud and Homes, 1995; Gibbs, 1999; Sluijsmans *et al*, 2002; Vickerman, 2009). It has been shown to increase students' capacity to engage more independently in exploration of ideas and articulation of their understanding (Boud *et al*, 1999). The responsibility for identifying learning needs and how to address them is given over to the student, but the information and insight provided through the peer feedback process helps to scaffold the self-assessment process (Boud, 1995b; Topping, 1996).

Falchikov (2001) defines peer assessment as students grading the work or performance of peers using relevant criteria. Various issues that arise from this approach are reported in the literature, for example: inhibition of co-operation (Boud *et al*, 1999), resistance from students (Brown *et al*, 1997) and a lack of reliability of assessments (e.g. Brown and Knight, 1994).

Therefore, in practice, the introduction of peer assessment to inexperienced students has the potential to be extremely problematic if linked to formal assessments and, ultimately, would do little to support either students or staff in the process. In relation to the assignment that is the focus of this study, the intended purpose was to provide more advice-centred feedback (e.g. Van den Berg *et al*, 2006) to students, rather than grading. The desired outcome was actually to engage students in a learning dialogue with each other, related to the expected performance and standards for the task. Falchikov (2001) defines this process as peer feedback and Liu and Carless (2006) suggest that this has greater potential for learning than traditional peer assessment. As such, the assessment process used for this study was designed to incorporate 'peer feedback' rather than true peer assessment.

Liu and Carless (2006) identify that peer assessment can be viewed by students as an additional burden rather than a valid form of learning if it is used as a supplementary activity. To reduce the potential resistance from students, the peer feedback element of the assignment was conducted in the place of a scheduled taught session and integrated fully into the module.

Method

This small-scale study took place during the academic year 2008 – 2009 and involved a sample of 32 second year undergraduate students who were studying a four-year, full time degree in Primary Education with Qualified Teacher Status. The assessment task was the first assignment of a year-long Professional Studies module which required the students to write an essay (3500 words) evaluating one reward/sanction system used to manage behaviour in primary school classrooms. The essay was worth 60% of the final mark for the module.

Instead of the traditional model of setting the task, then students submitting it formally and receiving feedback from marking by tutors, it was approached via a staged process that incorporated formative peer feedback.

The assignment was set at the beginning of Semester One. In the module handbook, a pro-forma was provided with the essay task which gave a structure for organising students' reading and preparation. Essentially, this required the student to explain their chosen reward/sanction system and the rationale behind it, and to summarise its strengths and weaknesses with each point referenced to the literature. Mid-way through the assessment period, from the setting of the task to the submission date (eight weeks in total), a reciprocal peer feedback session was conducted during a timetabled session for the module. Each student gave a short presentation to a small group of peers, outlining the details of their planning pro-forma, whilst the rest of the group recorded their feedback against a prepared response sheet. Dialogue took place around this feedback but each student also had a hard copy of their feedback to support further reflection after the session. This approach follows the recommendations of Falchikov's peer feedback marking scheme (1995). They were directed to incorporate this feedback into their final write-up of the essay and to include the peer feedback sheets as an appendix to their work. The essay was then submitted and marked as usual by the tutors.

The aim of the study was to explore the students' views of their first experience of involvement in a staged approach to assessment that incorporated reciprocal peer feedback. Data were collected via a questionnaire consisting of five open questions designed to stimulate students' reflections on the impact of the following aspects of the experience:

- How the student had used the planning pro-forma provided
- Presentation of their planning outlines to their group
- Dialogue with peers
- Peer feedback
- Comparison with previous assessment experiences

The questionnaire was administered during a teaching session of the module two weeks after the student had received their final mark and feedback on the assignment. The participants were given 45 minutes to make their individual written responses. They were provided with full information about the rationale behind the study and were given the option not to participate. Informed consent was obtained from participants and questionnaire responses were anonymous.

The responses to each question were collected verbatim, then raw data themes were identified using content analysis (Robson, 2002). Direct quotations from the students' responses served as the focus of analysis. The aim of the data analysis was to identify key themes underlying the students' views of the peer feedback process to ascertain the main areas of its impact. When attributing themes to particular quotes, validity was increased through consideration of different possible interpretations of meaning by triangulation of additional colleagues' viewpoints.

The inability to generalise from the findings due to the small sample size might be considered to be a key limitation of the study however, generalisation was not the aim. The intention was purely to improve practice in this particular learning environment and the emergent themes from the data will be used to inform the focus of future action research studies. The findings are likely to possess some 'transferability' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) to similar settings in higher education.

The data are presented and discussed in relation to key aspects of the assessment process that was applied to this assignment: use of the planning pro-forma, the reciprocal peer feedback process and comparisons with previous standard assessment experiences.

Findings and discussion

Impact of using the planning pro-forma

91% of students reported that they found the pro-forma to be useful. Their comments indicated that it had provided a good planning structure that aided their organisation of ideas for the essay. A third of the group extended the benefits of this structure to their reading, commenting that it helped to provide greater focus. As students frequently report difficulties in being sufficiently selective in their reading, then this would appear to be a significant strength of the approach. Some evidence of it encouraging greater autonomy was apparent, with one student commenting, 'It provided a model that I have continued to use to plan for other assignments.'

In relation to the process of presenting their ideas to small groups of peers by sharing their planning pro-forma, further positive outcomes were reported. Some students felt that it had enhanced their understanding of the topic and the assessment task itself, leading to improved confidence (Ballantyne *et al*, 2002). Putting their notes into words and discussing their ideas, helped to organise and develop their thoughts. One student identified that this process actually highlighted points that they had overlooked, whilst another said that it had promoted their professional interest in the topic. Some students commented on the fact that it had provided opportunity to share ideas about how to write up the essay and solve minor queries that they had, thus generating greater self-regulation (Boud, 2000). Examples of students' comments are presented in Table 1.

Selected raw data	Key theme
■ It helped to give a clear essay format and helped when finding references and a starting point. ■ I found it helped me to organise my ideas in a structured manner and collect my references alongside my points.	Structure
■ The pro-forma also enhanced my understanding of what the essay was about. ■ It helped me understand the information better.	Understanding
■ Sharing my pro-forma with the group meant that I felt more confident with the topic. ■ My discussion was more organised and I was more confident in taking part.	Confidence
■ Able to check that we were on the right lines. ■ I had reassurance and could see I was on the right track.	Reassurance
■ As a group we shared queries about the assignment and we were able to solve them. ■ It provided a model that I have continued to use for future assignments.	Self-regulation

Table 1. Impact of using the planning pro-forma: key themes and illustrative raw data

Impact of the reciprocal peer feedback process

The most widely reported outcome was that peers provided additional ideas about the student's chosen reward/sanction system and encouraged them to see alternative perspectives on the subject. The process highlighted points that individual students had not considered, resulting in them investigating the subject more thoroughly in response to constructive criticism than they would have otherwise. This had a subsequent effect on students' approaches to the literature. 41% reported that, as a result of the feedback process, they had more readings and research to follow up in order to fully explore the feedback they had been given. This implies engagement in a deep approach to their learning and promotion of critical thinking skills (Orsmond *et al*, 2000).

Boud (1995) asserts that peer assessment should equip students to engage in their own self-assessment. Some students recognised that the peer feedback process had acted as a stimulus for self-assessment, with one commenting, 'when looking at others' pro-forma then you could see weaknesses in your own assignment.' Another student reported that 'through hearing others' work, I could see the positives and negatives and feed this back. This was often applicable to my work and aided me in looking at it more critically.' The effect of such insight on self-assessment is also acknowledged by Topping (1996).

The staged approach to the assessment and the peer feedback process appeared to have a significant impact on students' experiences of writing the essay. Their comments raise the benefit of potential improvements being highlighted through peer feedback which they were then able to incorporate into their essay, after extending the breadth and depth of their reading. Several students reported that the writing process was easier as they were more focused and felt that they had more structure

(Vickerman, 2009). Some felt that this also improved their ability to make bolder editing decisions. Others reported general benefits of improved confidence and reassurance about the approach they were taking. This may have been due to the opportunity to discuss ideas about the structure of the assignment and different approaches used by their peers, which were noted in some responses. One student commented, 'I found writing up this essay a great deal easier than others as I already knew in detail what I wanted to write. My mark for this essay was higher than any I had previously done and it helped me writing assignments in the future.'

Improved understanding of the subject emerged as another theme underlying the students' views of the impact of the process. One student reported that 'it simplified ideas from the literature for me as the student spoke in their own language.' This links directly to the findings of Nicol and MacFarlane-Dick (2006) who suggest that students often provide explanations in a language that is more accessible to classmates. Other students commented that discussion had helped them to understand the issues in much greater depth and gave them more insight into different approaches to behaviour management. Listening to discussion of a broader range of topics than those immediately relevant to their own essay encouraged deeper learning from some students who noted that this provided a more substantial background to their own research, stimulating more arguments in their writing. In complete contrast, one student exhibited a classic surface approach to learning when they commented that it was not useful for them to learn about different rewards and sanctions that they were not researching. More altruistically, one student reported that they felt they were helping others to develop their ideas and had clearly gained a sense of satisfaction from this opportunity.

Some students were less enthusiastic about the process with a couple reporting some reluctance from group members to share their ideas and suggesting the existence of an element of competition. This is only to be expected when typical summative assessment practices have been found to lead to increased competition and an orientation towards performance goals rather than learning goals (Dweck, 2000). Others were supportive of the aims of the process but highlighted the lack of critical feedback from some individuals who did not wish to upset their friends (Brown and Knight, 1994). One individual took this further and actually placed the blame on her peers for her low mark on the assignment, stating, ' My group didn't give me critical feedback…This then led to me writing an assignment that didn't really have a focus…resulting in a low mark of 45%.' This is an interesting response, indicating an extremely high degree of teacher dependence that is transferred directly to peers in the absence of the tutor. Although, this student's view of peer feedback is negative, it could be argued that it exemplifies the characteristic learning behaviours perpetuated by the traditional model for assessment in higher education, thus presenting convincing evidence of the need for it to be challenged if deeper, lifelong learning skills are to be developed (Boud, 1990). Examples of students' comments are presented in Table 2.

Selected raw data	Key theme
■ Receiving other people's views made me more aware of alternative perspectives. ■ Gave me the opportunity to gather other people's ideas that I may not have thought of.	Alternative perspectives
■ Gave ideas for further research; impacted on reading. ■ It was a useful opportunity to hear about various authors and research which you have not come across.	Additional reading
■ They were able to show me parts of the assignment that I needed to strengthen. ■ Other students suggested new ideas that could benefit my assignment.	Areas for improvement
■ Improved what I was going to write in my assignment. ■ Altered the editing process for final write-up; felt a lot more confident in this.	Closing the gap
■ We could also share ideas about the write up of the assignment. ■ Able to check we were on the right lines.	Reassurance
■ Increased professional subject knowledge. ■ The discussion helped to clarify and secure my own knowledge on the topic.	Understanding
■ The areas not covered by my choice of subject matter helped give a more substantial background to my own research. ■ I also felt that I was helping others develop their ideas.	Deep approach to learning
■ Not really that useful to hear others as we all used different sanctions/rewards.	Surface approach to learning
■ People were not willing to share their references – some people very competitive. ■ Some people were unwilling to share ideas.	Competition
■ My group wasn't really critical just because they didn't want to upset anyone. ■ Got a lot of constructive feedback from peers.	Quality of feedback
■ When looking at others' pro-forma then you could see weaknesses in your own assignment.	Self-assessment

Table 2. Impact of the reciprocal peer feedback process: key themes and illustrative raw data

Comparisons with previous assessment experiences

A number of students felt that the provision of a staged structure was beneficial and this caused improved time management of the task. Responses indicated that they had started working on the assignment earlier than usual because of the requirement to present to their peers part-way through the semester, which resulted in improved organisation of their preparation. This suggests that time devoted to the task was increased (Topping, 1998), along with greater self-regulation (Boud, 2000; Nicol and MacFarlane-Dick, 2006).

The opportunity for discussion emerged as a major strength of the approach. Boud *et al* (1999) highlight the increased possibility for enhanced dialogue around ideas in the absence of the authoritative presence of the teacher. Students' comments touched on the advantage of the 'no pressure' environment for sharing and developing ideas which brought extra focus and support to the assessment process. Once again, the impact of the feedback discussion on broadening their reading and background knowledge was noted. Some students also mentioned the reassurance they gained from sharing their ideas both about the subject matter and the assignment itself, suggesting that this reduced anxiety. There was also a noticeable reduction in the number of assignment-related queries to teaching staff. Students reported that the process had improved their confidence in their ability to organise their thoughts, to engage in discussion around the topic and to consider multiple perspectives in their writing. This not only suggests improved self-regulation in completion of the task, but also indicates that peer feedback encouraged application of critical thinking to it (Orsmond *et al*, 2000).

Appreciation was expressed for the opportunity to gain more feedback prior to writing. Having the chance to then make modifications to the essay in light of the peer discussion and feedback was acknowledged as a significant bonus, thus confirming the effectiveness of employing the design principles for peer assessment suggested by Van den Berg *et al* (2006). One student made a direct connection between this and the achievement of her highest mark for this particular assignment. Numerous responses also made reference to the creation of a positive atmosphere around this assignment that seemed to have increased student motivation to succeed. Improved motivation is a commonly reported outcome of peer assessment (e.g. Race, 1998; Zariski, 1996) but the combination of this and the fact that the students reported revising their work to incorporate improvements generated from the peer feedback suggests a deeper shift in thinking towards a vision of malleable, rather than fixed, ability (Dweck, 2000; Yorke and Knight, 2004) which has beneficial implications for their future approaches to learning in encouraging them to persist (Boyle and Nicol, 2003).

One student reported that the approach did not compare favourably with the traditional individual approach to essay writing for the reason that 'students don't know what is good or bad so group discussions are not really useful because they can't and don't criticise each other's ideas.' Even though the process did not incorporate grading, this notion of perceived expertise still emerged as an issue in relation to doubting students' capacity to provide insightful feedback, concurring with the findings of Liu and Carless (2006). Examples of students' comments are presented in Table 3.

Selected raw data	Key theme
■ Had the opportunity to discuss areas I was going to cover with other people in group – challenged my thinking and developed areas I was going to discuss.	Dialogue
■ More chance to modify. ■ By gaining feedback during earlier stages I could ensure that the assignment had more focus. After gaining feedback, I found my work was more structured. This reflected in my marks – this assignment was the highest mark I have achieved so far.	Feedback prior to writing
■ I felt more confident when writing that I had considered many points of view. ■ Helped me organise my assignment better and made me more confident organising my thoughts.	Confidence in thinking/writing
■ It made me more organised to start the assignment because I was feeding back to my peers. ■ Timing was better.	Time management
■ Having criticism from others and being able to discuss requirements gave me a more positive outlook on the assignment. ■ This created a more positive atmosphere surrounding the assignment as it allowed us all to discuss the assignment and the requirements.	Positive attitude
■ It meant that we had to start work earlier than usual which helped me to get motivated.	Motivation
■ I have used ideas from this technique and have improved my marks for work.	Self-regulation
■ It also allowed us to share ideas which we are not normally comfortable doing in individual assignments. ■ It was much more helpful than going it alone.	Collaboration
■ Was much more effective. ■ We should always have this type of seminar before and after assignments.	Generic positive comments
■ I can see how it could help when people are honest and happy to share criticisms but if not it can be a waste of time.	Reservations

Table 3. Comparisons with previous assessment experiences: key themes and illustrative raw data

Conclusions

Although some reservations were expressed, they did not represent significant resistance on the part of students to engage in peer feedback as part of assessment. Many more benefits were reported than drawbacks, supporting the conclusions of Falchikov (1995) regarding the peer feedback process. Even though they were in the minority, such reservations on the part of students should be addressed and strategies for developing greater willingness and capacity to provide critical feedback should be considered for future development. The reluctance of some students to share their work with others is quite understandable when they have been immersed in an education system that is dominated by a performance culture. The potential impact of this resistance seemed to be lessened by the nature of this assignment where students were investigating different aspects of the same topic but applying the same assessment criteria to it. It certainly suggests that the nature of the assignment needs to be considered carefully before attempting to engage students in peer feedback in order to enhance the possibility of a positive response.

One particular student's summarising comment about the assignment though, confirms that this assessment approach is worth pursuing further:

> "I felt I had worked on it for ages but when I came to writing up, I was clear and confident on exactly what aspect I was focusing on. Discussing in groups helped me and gave me more confidence as sometimes individual work on assignments can leave me feeling slightly confused and sometimes struggle. I really did enjoy this piece."

Returning to Yorke's (2003) question of whether feedback leads to changes in students' behaviour, it can be concluded from the evidence embedded in the students' comments, that this process did stimulate some changes for the majority of individuals. The nature of those changes holds significance not just for their performance on this assignment, but also for their longer-term learning behaviour.

Based on this encouraging start, the assignment was repeated with this year's cohort and was well-received. These students have asked if the opportunity for peer feedback could be incorporated into at least one of their Level 3 modules next year as they find it provides a useful template to adapt for other assignments with the same generic assessment criteria. Planning is in process to incorporate a similar peer feedback session into a Level 3 Primary Science assignment to explore what role it may have in supporting the development of students' understanding of the requirements for critical reading and writing which is a challenge for many undergraduates.

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"Flying Faculty and the Transnational Teacher" - the way forward for globalized education?

Mike Aiello and **John Clarke**

This paper focuses on the development of a particular pattern of delivery and support within international education. A model often called "transnational teaching" has emerged in which students do not travel to other countries to receive tuition. Rather they remain in their home country and are taught by academic staff from the validating university who travel out to teach some or part of the programme. This is often popularly referred to as the "flying faculty" model (HEA 2010, Dunn and Wallace 2008).

The delivery of the programme is almost inevitably intense and highly concentrated given the costs of delivery and support. Such direct teaching is also of course reinforced by different forms of distance support for learners such as virtual learning environments, teleconferencing etc. As other writers indicate, this model while it is potentially attractive and has obvious benefits in terms of University Quality Assurance procedures raises fundamental issues about the ways in which we structure teaching and learning, our models of learning based on conceptions of "digestion and making sense of ideas over time", and the ways in which new HE professionals are trained and prepared. (Smith and Todd 2010).

This paper is a case study of provision which follows the above model, validated by a UK University and taking place in Athens, Dublin and Kuala Lumpur.

Findings suggest that this mode of delivery presents critical challenges to HE teachers' sense of identity, their assumptions about effective pedagogy and their philosophies of learning and teaching. This has important implications for initial and continuing professional development, patterns of quality assurance and the organisational structure of international collaborative education.

The pressures of globalization as an economic and cultural phenomenon as well as an ideological process (Rizvi and Lingard 2010, Spring 2008) has led to increased pressures on Higher Education institutions to become involved in various forms of international and "transnational" provision. At its most obvious this takes the form of students travelling to other countries to study at the universities of their choice. This has become a major element in the provision of European Australian and US universities providing a source of income for hard-pressed institutions struggling with constraints on domestic sources of funding and fees. A second approach is to provide validation or recognition to overseas programmes or to "export" the structure of the home-based provision to be delivered by local institutions using their own staff through some form of franchise or collaborative arrangement. This paper focuses on the development of a third model of delivery and support within international education. The model which is often called "transnational teaching" (McBurnie and Pollock 2000, HEA 2010) has emerged where students do not travel to other countries to receive tuition. Rather they remain in their home country and are taught by academic staff from the validating university who travel out to

teach some or part of the programme. This is often popularly referred to as the "flying faculty" model (Dunn and Wallace 2008). Visiting staff from the accrediting institution stay for a limited time before returning to their own base. It is common for staff to travel out and back regularly over a period of years (HEA 2010). The British Council estimates that some 250, 000 students are taking UK higher education courses that are being delivered in a host country (quoted in Smith 2009)

This approach to delivery can arise from a variety of pressures. Firstly it may be felt that the staff of the validating university have particular skills or experiences which are not available in the host country. It may also be felt that even if the skills and knowledge are available in the host institution, the prestige or standing granted by the fact that the programme is taught by travelling staff would make the award more marketable.

In terms of the systems of the validating university it may often be felt that quality assurance processes are easier to navigate where there is direct personal involvement by colleagues from the same institution as the people monitoring and approving the provision. Sometimes the "flying faculty" model is seen as transitional whereby travelling staff are shadowed by local teachers with a view to being replaced by them in the longer term. This view may of course be seen by its critics as reflecting a form of postcolonial valuation of the travelling staff as in some sense inherently superior, perhaps echoing the past patterns of ideological subordination, and where local staff support the learning their status may be seen as more peripheral. (Leask 2004) Nevertheless the model has many advantages for staff and students. There are obviously opportunities to develop international contacts and improve teaching skills. Familiar approaches to teaching and learning as well as aspects of curriculum content can be enriched by being applied in different contexts.

Many staff see "transnational teaching as a means to experience new and interesting challenges and to have the opportunity to enhance their teaching and learning practices based on their international experiences." (Smith 2009 p.112)

From the point of view of the students, the ability to obtain what are often seen as high-status qualifications without the need to travel abroad and support oneself in a foreign city can be very attractive and may appear much more economically viable.

This paper sets out to examine one area within the broad field of "flying faculty" provision. This is the essentially pedagogical question of how delivery and support for learning changes within the new context. The "flying faculty" model inevitably involves changes in the way in which learning is delivered which arise from cultural and economic factors but most obviously are rooted in logistics. If colleagues are to sent to overseas sites to deliver the learning it is likely to put pressure on institutions to concentrate delivery into shorter time periods and to "front load" courses and modules with sessions at the beginning of the process followed by support structures which may be IT based or delivered by local staff put into place during the period between the front loading and the time of assessment. The early delivery of the programme is almost inevitably intense and highly concentrated given the costs of delivery and support. (HEA 2010) Direct teaching by travelling or home based staff is also of course generally reinforced by different forms of e-support for learners such as virtual learning environments, teleconferencing etc.

As other writers indicate, this model while it is potentially attractive and has obvious benefits in

terms of University Quality Assurance procedures raises fundamental issues about the ways in which we structure teaching and learning, our models of learning based on conceptions of "digestion and making sense of ideas over time", and the ways in which new HE professionals are trained and prepared. (Smith and Todd 2007, Smith 2009). The concern is that the very intensity and truncated nature of the direct delivery inclines tutors to revert to what they might identify as more traditional didactic methods focussing on teacher centred presentations and lectures. Bligh in his classic study of lecturing points out that the most common justification offered by staff for choosing the lecture as a teaching method is "the need to get through the content". Teacher centred methods are seen as granting the lecturer control over the timing and format of the students' introduction to important and accurate content. (Bligh 2000). Gibbs offered the view that "Its the only way to make sure the ground is covered" as the second of his "Twenty Terrible Reasons for Lecturing" as long ago as 1981 (Gibbs 1981) While thinking and writing about approaches to teaching in higher education have changed significantly in the last 30 years ad all Higher Education institutions have Learning teaching and assessment policies which commit them to interactive student centred styles of delivery which are based on student autonomy and ownership of learning (see for example Ramsden 2000) there remains a tendency for lecturers under pressure of time or resources to revert to a didactic mode.

How far is this valid for the case of "flying faculty" and if it is so, to what extent does the e-learning basis of the follow up to initial intensive teaching actually "compensate" for the shortcomings of the front loading?

This paper is a case study of provision which follows the above model, validated by a UK University and taking place in Athens, Dublin and Kuala Lumpur. It involves a series of unstructured interviews with staff of a UK university who have been involved in delivering "flying faculty" based learning in these different settings. The respondents delivered programmes in education (Special Educational Needs), tourism and leisure management, Higher Education teaching (a PG Cert in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education) and different health related programmes. They represented different faculties and service teams within the university. Although most of the provision was post-graduate the health colleagues did have experience of undergraduate courses.

While all of the courses were based on the "flying faculty" model outlined above they differed in the degree to which they were explicitly adapted to the local circumstances and in whether or not they involved the use of local staff to shadow and perhaps eventually to replace the travelling staff. In the health programmes there was generally an expectation that locally based colleagues would attend the "front loaded" sessions and thus be able to provide tutorial and study support to learners during the rest of the module. In the case of the special educational needs programme by contrast a key element of the requirement for the programme being locally recognised was that all processes of teaching and assessment needed to be in the hands of travelling staff.

Respondents were invited to respond to a variety of prompts which focussed on different aspects of the delivery from planning and course design through student induction, choice of methods, feedback and patterns of relationships with students. Throughout the interviews there was an emphasis on the two elements of initial front loaded input and the structures of support (local and distance) provided to learners through the rest of the course.

Induction

Respondents were asked to comment on the ways in which learners were inducted into their role as "transnational students". How far were they told that this involved a new or unfamiliar approach?

Generally respondents took the view that this was a key element of the first part of the programme

"I never felt any obligation to convince the students… I started out by stressing the commitment to a short intensive period of study and then a longer period when they had to maintain the interest and the application… I just kept going on about how important their commitment was. The reality of sitting in this college in Piraeus for five hours evening after evening - it was unusual for us and for them - if I was creating this programme again I would make more preparation for this key element."
Respondent 1
(Athens MA Tourism and Leisure Management)

"I am always very positive I say we have substituted one week for seven so they are fortunate in a way; they have us there to question. I talk through the model - discuss the level of support they can expect - most students have availed themselves of that support and I tell them that those who have done better"
Respondent 2
(Athens MA Special Educational Needs)

"I sold it as: we were excited at the new approach and we wanted them to evaluate it with us. This wasn't their agenda – they were anxious. In practice it didn't work as it did here – even though they worked very hard at it."
Respondent 3
(Dublin PG Cert LTHE)

Course design

Respondents were asked about how they designed the learning to take account of the front loading and the support structures. **Respondent 1** suggested that the model employed was in many ways like the home programme *"telescoped down from eight weeks into a much more intense period"* while another colleague pointed out that his plan *"began as being very much about content – it didn't help that we were suddenly cut down in the number of hours we had"*
Respondent 4
(Kuala Lumpur MA Health).

Respondent 3, teaching a group who all worked within the same college, set out to deliver content fairly intensively on a model of *"workshops plus peer group learning, but I soon found out that they had not previously had much opportunity to share ideas about their roles within the organisation and I began to think – I have to deliver some content here but this meant slowing down the really valuable action-learning-set type learning from really taking off. Normally we would have let this take its own way but this was a paid-for course – all the students were selected and it seemed important to stick to the outcomes, so I was torn between my instincts as a teacher, to let them talk and share ideas and what I thought were the demands of the programme"*

Respondent 1 makes the point that it is easy to exaggerate the differences between home provision and overseas *"of course there were things that you probably wouldn't do as much on the home programme … but if we are being honest it is unusual for students here to really go away and reflect and read the materials etc. between sessions"*
All the respondents suggest then that there is a tendency for the earliest sessions to be much more didactic and presentational than would be the norm at home but they suggest that this is reinforced by the cultural expectations of the students and the host institution.

"This model of 'I am the teacher you are the students - you will sit there for eight hours while I talk at you' is very much the norm in their experience so far, certainly below Masters level. And while the students themselves acknowledge that that is not the best way, they can sometimes slip in to student mode and they feel comfortable with that approach and I sometimes feel that the college feels the same in that they say, well we are paying for this. If he is there for eight hours that is a better deal than if he is only there for six hours even though what we might be doing in that period is a lot better in the long run."

Respondent 4
(Kuala Lumpur MA Health)

"I try to combine methods mostly presentational but then I try to get students to discuss things. – It is not a familiar Greek way of working, compared with UK students who have been experiencing involvement and group work since the literacy hour in Primary School. The students got used to it and began to find it novel and exciting"

Respondent 2
(Athens MA Special Educational Needs)

However there was a general tendency for this approach to break down as the sessions went on and the students became more familiar with a more open and student-centred teaching approach.

"My methods were a mix – much more of a straightforward presentation – to pick up on their cultural context. Their expectation was that the 'professor would present sometimes even read aloud'. But this broke down as students became more familiar."

Respondent 1
(Athens MA Tourism and Leisure Management)

"I could quite easily have gone into straight transmission mode because they would have accepted that but I could tell that they were looking at me as if I was speaking Hindi."

Respondent 3
(Dublin PG Cert LTHE)

Learner support

After the initial sessions there were different models of how the students were to be supported. In the case of the Malaysian health programmes there was a model whereby local staff would attend the sessions and then be available for tutorials and study support. However this did not always work fully

"It was a model of college staff shadowing what went on so as to be able to offer support. It didn't always work they were under pressure themselves so there was often intermittent attendance. This made it difficult for them to offer support. When it did work it was good because they included study days one day a week or fortnight with partner staff –this gave the students protected learning time"

Respondent 6
(Kuala Lumpur Various Health programmes)

In other cases the support structure for learners after the initial sessions centred on IT and different forms of distance learning.

"It is important to make sure there are tasks on the VLE, which are directly linked to the sessions taught. The students are highly proficient in the English language but may not always have taken on board exactly what was said so you need to be able to respond quickly to e mail. I suppose this can compensate for the "digestion period" you get with weekly meetings over a semester."

Respondent 2
(Athens MA Special Educational Needs)

"There is the precursor that you potentially have to get it done – international students seem to be more advanced and a deeper desire to connect with you than home students – we use asynchronous and synchronous conferencing and we have made great use of student feedback to improve the course."
Respondent 5
(Kuala Lumpur Various Health)

Technology

Interestingly though given the stress on new technologies in all the literature on globalisation and internationalisation in education (Morris 2008) the most common source of support and feedback during the programmes was e-mail. Staff however developed new approaches to communicating in this way and used the VLE as a bank of resources.

"I have changed how I write my e mail responses ... now I am much more constructive so that they are point by point, step by step".
(Respondent 5 Kuala Lumpur Various Health)

"I try to make sure the VLE contains all the important resources – providing a canon of key texts guides to critical reading. I try to use it to widen the field ".
Respondent 2
(Athens MA Special Educational Needs)

"I don't suppose I did design the support – I just assumed they would use new technologies But in the end it rested on e mails and phone calls"
Respondent 3 (PG Cert LTHE Dublin)

And even the limited use of technologies like the VLE could be problematic
"The times we went over there were their highlights and the rest was an irritant – they didn't really see the connection"
Respondent 3
(PG Cert LTHE Dublin)

Lecturer's roles

Respondents identified a range of pressures on the "transnational lecturer" which potentially affected the quality of delivery and support. As one respondent who was a programme manager as well as a tutor said
"Managing flying faculty staff is not easy - there is a real danger of burn-out and the identification of the programme with one person is dangerous. Especially when it involves being away for a prolonged period."
Respondent 1
(Athens MA Tourism and Leisure Management)

"You can feel a bit crunched by fact that different students need different things your - home based students don't understand why you miss sessions and are not around. When you come back students and colleagues can load you with catch up work and then overseas students make demands on you while you are dealing with your home responsibilities… Overall the problem is time- it's invisible time - mapping the amount of time that you use with international students is very hard because it is invisible - you can't say how much pressure it is creating"
Respondent 5
(Kuala Lumpur Various Health)

Overall view

Despite the pedagogical challenges outlined above respondents were all positive about the experience of transnational teaching. Sometimes this focussed on the ability to *"champion"* tutors' own subject area
"As a teacher I have a lot of specialist knowledge to impart to students who may not have access to the same sort of knowledge within their own country…we are offering expertise and we are dealing with educational practitioners"
Respondent 2
(Athens MA Special Educational Needs)

Others focussed on their own learning
"I don't think that before I started this I could really understand what Malaysian health care was like… it's a huge cultural learning process and there is still some work to do there from us to make it work for them".
Respondent 5
(Kuala Lumpur Various Health)

In general there was a consensus that the model was a potentially exciting and valuable experience for learners and teachers alike but that the main difficulty was the way in which time was allocated to allow for effective support and to prepare and design learning effectively.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine some of the pedagogical issues associated with so-called "flying faculty" teaching in Higher Education. The research is based on interviews with staff from one UK university who are involved in this form of delivery. Nevertheless their experience covered a range of different cultures and subject areas. There was a common set of concerns about time and resourcing and a (perhaps inevitable) sense that the delivery model would be improved by allocating initial resources better to enable materials and distance support structures to be planned more effectively and by recognising the "invisible time" needed by tutors to fulfil their roles effectively. There is also a demand for some recognition that this involvement has an impact of the "conventional" teaching colleagues do in their home institution.

What the interviews suggest is that there is a recognition that an initial effect of the logistical and resource pressures created by this mode of delivery encourages a more presentational didactic approach to planning teaching. This is reinforced by the cultural expectations if the students who are often unfamiliar with student-centred approaches and a sense that the rationale for the delivery in terms of stakeholders and students rested firmly on a model of the lecturer as a "bought in" expert, who is only justifying their presence by providing "knowledge" in a relatively straightforward way. There is a further sense that this initial tendency to limit the degree of student involvement and autonomy is not mitigated by the use of new technologies and e-learning as part of the subsequent support structure. Because of the time constraints on the lecturers and the technological limitations encountered by the students, electronic or distance support rarely went beyond the exchange of e-mails and the storage of key resources on the VLE.

There is a danger then that the delivery model for "flying faculty" programmes contradicts the lecturers' own sense of what best practice is and fails to match the institution's model of good teaching and learning as laid out in strategy documents etc.

However the interviews go on to indicate that the programmes have to be understood a s a fluid cultural exchange as much as a one-way delivery. All the lecturers felt transformed and enriched by the teaching experience and part of that development was the way in which the learning of the groups involved took on its own momentum.(compare Leask 2004) So groups unfamiliar with student centred learning came to enjoy it and use it for their own purposes. Presentational models were negotiated into interactive and autonomous experiences. The initial tendency to favour direct transmission models rarely survived long.

The role of electronic support and the use of the VLE seems from the interviews to be a more difficult area. There is often an assumption that distance support is a cost free or at any rate a low cost option and hence time and resources are sometimes at a premium (Bentley *et al* 2010) Tutors were enthusiastic about providing high quality distance support but saw the twin pressures of time and the difficulties with resources as standing in the way.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations arise from the above findings.

Firstly it is clear that the "flying faculty" model is popular with staff and seems to be welcomed by students. It raises questions of cultural valuation and in the case of programmes which involve support by local staff it demands a serious examination of the relative status and roles of the different institutions.

While it is clear that the attractiveness of the model derives in large part from its cost-effectiveness as compared with alternative models this should not detract from the necessity to provide tutors with sufficient time to prepare the delivery of sessions and the systems of distance support in ways that enhance learning and allow the programmes to remain in alignment with the principles of the university's teaching and learning policy.

A key principle of curriculum design needs to focus on the special nature of the student role in this model. Different respondents identified the importance of initial modules which were "more about process than content" focussing on learning approaches reflection and use of evidence along with writing skills and operating as an independent learner. Without this there was a danger that after the initial sessions students could feel cut loose from the course structures and fail to make use of the support systems available.

Staff involved in these programmes should be provided with appropriate professional and staff development (Smith 2009) . "Flying faculty" teaching is sufficiently different from conventional delivery for teachers to need support in dealing with cultural and language problems, effective communication techniques and the personal pressures that can arise from "the loneliness of the long distance teacher". It is also important to

arm colleagues against the felt need to revert to methods of delivery which they would be reluctant to use in their home-based teaching, because of the logistical and cultural pressures they may feel are on them.

University validation and accreditation committees should also recognize that the fact that a programme is a "telescoped version of something we do back home" is no guarantee that it will be delivered in line with what the home institution would see as best practice and should ask questions about pedagogy and support. In particular it is important for panels to assure themselves that the technological infrastructure available to students is sufficiently robust to support the need for e-support generated by such a model of delivery.

This study focuses on the attitude of staff to "flying faculty" teaching. The voice of the learner is only available as mediated through the lecturers' own accounts. Further research should take some of these findings and ask students how far they are valid for them. Do the assumptions made by tutors about what students like and dislike, are familiar or unfamiliar with etc. match their own accounts? Similarly where this is relevant it would be useful to add the voices of locally based teachers and examine their view of the way in which delivery and support work.

It would also be valuable to consider the role of the locally based partner institutions which host the provision and the in-country processes of validation and approval which may often follow separate agendas to those of the home university.

Finally though it is important to stress the overwhelmingly positive view of this model of teaching identified among the lecturers. All of them "would recommend it to a friend" and the reservations and difficulties they discuss are essentially barriers in the way of doing this job as well as they can.

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Sport Start: Creating a model to enhance student employability through employer engagement

Track Dinning

The Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Liverpool John Moores University, has a key focus on developing employability, leadership and entrepreneurial skills in students. Whilst based within the subject areas of PE, Sport, Dance and Outdoor Education the approaches we are developing could be adaptable to other disciplines. We are particularly interested in expanding the ways in which students engage with the world of work whilst also encouraging employers/external organisations to see the full value and scope of opportunities to engage with HE. Utilising a broadened definition of work-related learning, that incorporates but is not limited to work-based placements, is giving rise to a diversity of opportunities for staff, students and external organisations to work with and learn from each other.

Presented in this case study is a model by which staff are able to strengthen and develop partnerships with external organisations and, in doing so, give students greater opportunities for a rich, authentic experience of the workplace, both within and outside of the curriculum. Building on the success of JMUpstart, an undergraduate dance company founded at LJMU, that provides students with experience of a professional working environment as part of their programme of study, has led to the creation of Sport Start. As the name suggests, Sport Start has its focus within the sport development subject areas at LJMU and acts as a way of promoting the student 'workforce' to employers/external organisations.

Sport Start matches student skills and knowledge with the needs of employers/wider community organisations, through both curricular and extra-curricular activities. The opportunity to work with employers/external organisations in a variety of ways provides students with an enriched experience that will enhance their professional competencies, entrepreneurial skills and ultimately their employability.

Employers benefit from being able to access the skills of students in a flexible way that more adequately reflects their needs. This might be through traditional work based learning placements, project work or other activities embedded in the curriculum. Alternatively, where employer-driven activities do not adequately address curriculum needs, students may be able to undertake project work as paid or voluntary extra curricular activity. What's important is that the students has an opportunity for direct experience of the workplace and the employers needs are met.

Sport Start: the model in detail

As outlined above, the model supports activity between staff, students and employers/external organisations both in and outside of the curriculum. Projects may be driven by employers but, in promoting student enterprise and creativity, students may also be supported in pursuing their own project ideas.

Creating strong partnerships with subject-related employers is imperative, those recognising the potential of students as a valuable workforce are key to the success of this model. Whilst many employers may take students on work based placements the success of this full model looks for engagement at a variety of levels: curriculum-based projects, work-based learning placements, paid as well as voluntary opportunities.

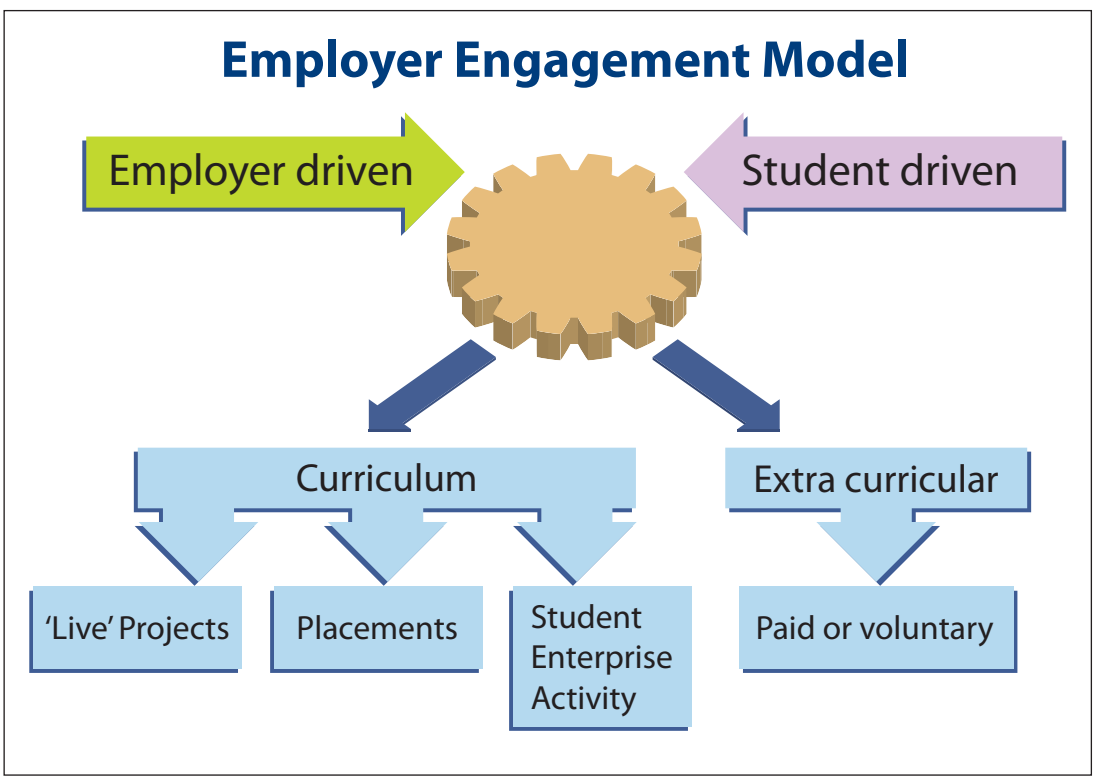
Two distinct routes for student work and employer engagement:

Employer driven:

Real life projects and work opportunities are supplied by partner organisations and feed into the model (Fig. 1). The decision is then made within the subject area as to whether the work could be undertaken as part of the curriculum, or offered as either paid or volunteer work. Through engagement of students in a variety of settings, it is hoped that the partner organisation will develop the relationship it has with the university/subject area and extend the opportunities it offers in the future for work-related learning or enterprise activity.

For the students there is the possibility that an initial project may lead on to further links and future employment.

Fig 1



Student driven:

Beyond the connection with external stakeholders the model also offers students a platform from which to launch their own project ideas. Through the 'Live Ideas' route students who have the entrepreneurial drive will be encouraged to set up and run their own projects and events. Employer engagement is still required and their needs may still be met, as students are encouraged to research their project ideas to establish if there could be a demand within the community for the new product/service. Without creating a link with an employer/external organisation the project may not be undertaken.

Sport Start acts as a focus for links to be made between staff, students and external employers/organisations. It supports work-related learning within the curriculum that may be enacted through traditional placements, employer-driven projects or by students pursuing their own project ideas in consultation/negotiation with external organisations. Sport Start offers external organisations with a single point of contact for accessing student talents.

What makes it work:

- An enthusiastic engaging programme team of academic staff that are open to supporting a diverse range of work-related opportunities within the curriculum.
- Having staff who are able to draw on their previous/current roles to make links with employers
- Having sufficient number of pre-planned 'live' projects with the capacity to respond to and support students' own ideas
- A good network of subject related mentors for students
- Employers that value the potential of the student workforce

Examples of current work:

The concept of Sport Start is building up speed and developing its capacity. In its two years of operation 30 projects have been undertaken with 150 students. The nature of curriculum-based work they have undertaken has been diverse and has included:

- Supporting the Step into Sport conference
- Multi Skills Coaching in local primary schools
- Setting up a programme of inclusive sports activities in primary schools
- Supporting 14-16 year olds on careers and future opportunities
- Creating development plans for local sports organisations

Some of these projects, initially undertaken by one cohort of students, are leading to placement opportunities for future cohorts.

Strong partnership links are being built with local organisations, including Liverpool City Council, Merseyside County Sport Partnership, School Sport Partnerships.

Paid and voluntary work through the Sport Start coaching agency, has provided over 6000 hours of work for students in its first 2 years of operation

Employer Comments

When asked what if anything did the students do well comments included:

Fantastic organisational skill, always arrived in plenty of time to set up for competitions. They also dealt with teachers and pupils in a professional manner even in difficult situations. Used their initiative and only needed input on one occasion.

Delivered well planned, informed lessons in a friendly manner. Pupils were kept interested and inspired during each session.

When asked what skills the employers thought their projects developed, comments included:
I think that the project helped the students to realise what expectations there are by employers from employees. The students were also responsible for liaising with teachers/play workers when organising and delivering their sessions which enhanced communication skills and confidence. The students also witnessed challenges that face Sport Development projects which enhanced academic learning.

Planning and organisation for sport events. It also helps students to appreciate even the best laid plans have problems within school sport. Thus, the project highlighted there are practical issues that may not always be teachable through theory.

How sports development really happens on the ground in a SSP. Working with real people and having to meet actual deadlines. At times the students needed a lot of guidance on achieving the task. Communication skills and time management skills were developed.

Where next?

With the extension of people's involvement in physical activity high on the government agenda, it is likely that the opportunities for students to be involved in associated community projects will continue to grow. Currently Sport Start and its variety of projects and activities are being managed by a single person (the author of this case study). In common with JMUpstart, there is the potential for students to be more closely involved in the running and organisation of the service, under the guidance of a member of staff. This will provide students with a significant learning opportunity and first-hand experience of various aspects of leadership and decision-making. It will also enable their voice to be more clearly heard in terms of directing the activity.

Currently we are also looking at the transferability of this model/way of working into other subject areas and, where possible, to work with subject teams to develop similar student workforce models. The end result being the sustainability of connections between employers, university staff and students that support the learning and development of all three groups.

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Developing an undergraduate e-journal in the School of Social Science

Dr. Liz James and Dr. Kay Standing

Abstract

Work on embedding the links between teaching and research within the Higher Education setting has resulted in the creation of avenues of publication specifically for undergraduates. This paper presents the findings of our research into the possibilities for building on this work in order to establish an undergraduate e-journal within the School of Social Science. The paper will also outline the challenges we faced when developing the e-journal and the possibilities for future progress.

Introduction

Recent years have seen a growth in legislative and policy interventions designed to reshape the relationship between research and teaching in Higher Education in the UK and elsewhere. The 2003 White Paper and ensuing discussion, formalised as the 2004 Education Act, (Department for Education and Skills, 2003; 2004) set the context for the development of a closer relationship between research and teaching in the undergraduate curriculum in the UK. The Government was forced to acknowledge that rather than concentrating research funding in a comparatively small number of "elite" institutions, there were many benefits in developing 'research-informed teaching environments' (Department for Education and Skills, 2004) in 'new' as well as 'old' universities.

In parallel, a growing body of literature has explored different elements of the teaching-research nexus, from idealistic pronouncements concerning their intrinsic linkages, to statistical analyses finding no correlation (Hattie & Marsh, 1996). Early contributions to this debate called for universities to make the integration of the two fields part of their mission (Hattie & Marsh, 1996), while more recent efforts propose a number of different schemes for understanding the variety of possible relationships have been proposed (see for example Brew, 2003; Jenkins & Zetter, 2003; Jenkins, 2004; Jenkins, Healey & Zetter, 2007; Griffiths, 2007; Taylor 2007).

Healey (2005) has conceptualised the possible relationships between teaching and research as quadrants divided by twin axes: between students as participants or audience in the research process and between an emphasis within the curriculum on the use of research as content or as method. Thus a fully research-based curriculum would focus on the use of inquiry-based learning, with students as active participants in the research process.

While the benefits that research-engaged staff bring to their teaching has to be acknowledged, student engagement is best enhanced by their direct involvement in the research process itself, particularly via final level dissertations, case studies and projects (Healey *et al* 2010: 242). This form of engagement further works to draw students into the specific 'research culture' of the chosen academic field (Metcalfe, 2007). For the majority of students, however, the research process ends with the submission and marking of their work, meaning that their understanding of this process is incomplete. Walkington and Jenkins (2008) therefore propose that, in order to fill this 'gap', students should be given access to the means of publication.

In light of these debates, the Higher Education Funding Council for England identified the relationship between teaching and research as a priority area and made funds available through the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund to enable institutions to enhance linkages within their own environments.

In 2007-08 Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) was therefore able introduce a stream of funding to encourage the integration of teaching and research in the undergraduate curriculum. Within the School of Social Science, we used a small Research Informed Teaching grant to investigate students' attitudes towards the possibility of establishing an undergraduate e-journal, and to explore the different models available. Students expressed concerns about committing to a student-led module for credit, but were interested in seeing an example of an e-journal up and running to demonstrate how it could work and inspire others to get involved. While the full results of this project were delivered at the LJMU Teaching and Learning Conference in 2008 (James & Standing, 2008), this paper will briefly review the findings from our initial research, then discuss the lessons we have learned from developing the e-journal and the possibilities for future.

Undergraduate e-journals

Undergraduate e-journals are on-line journals either publishing student work or run by students themselves. They are well-established in the USA but are a relatively new idea in the UK. Nevertheless, a number of British universities are now developing the e-journals either within a single institution or as a wider collaboration. A useful review of these can be found in Walkington & Jenkins (2008). Whilst some remain sceptical of their worth (Gilbert, 2004), a range of benefits have been identified by pioneers in the area. These benefits will be explained before we discuss our specific findings.

The literature surrounding undergraduate e-journals revealed a number of potential uses. Firstly, the establishment of an e-journal provides a new avenue for the publishing of undergraduate work, contributing to the overall development of a research ethos. In doing this, they offer students new insights into the research process, embedding research informed teaching within the curriculum (Knight, 2006). In particular, they can be utilised to focus on the development of academic writing, the understanding of which often remains 'tacit' rather than explicit within undergraduate programmes (Elton, 2010). Walkington and Jenkins (2008) further argue that the process of writing is crucial to the development of understanding and that it is important to afford this opportunity to undergraduates if they are to feel part of a research community.

Publication in a journal functions as a reward and showcase for examples of excellent student work and can enhance students 'employability' skills, providing evidence of this to enhance their CV's (Knight, 2006; Potter, nd). Whilst recognising the achievements of the individual student-authors, an e-journal has a wider role in raising levels of motivation and aspiration amongst students (Knight, 2006), and encouraging the participation of the wider student body (Knight, 2004).

It is also important to consider the local disciplinary context of the teaching-research nexus. Many e-journals are produced by science departments and linked to research projects. However, as Taylor (2007) argues, the teaching-research nexus in scientific disciplines does not necessarily lead to an advantage in terms of a closer relationship between teaching and research, as the type of research conducted by staff may be of a level of complexity that is difficult to understand at undergraduate level. This is perhaps why, within Reinvention, the trans-disciplinary e-journal produced jointly by

the University of Warwick and Oxford Brookes University, the Arts and Social Sciences dominate (Metcalfe, 2008). Humanities and Social Science disciplines enjoy a comparative flexibility in shaping programme and module content and choosing pedagogical methods which affords particular opportunities. At this level, the establishment of an e-journal can raise the profile of the School and wider institution, with the global reach of the internet being a significant factor (Knight, 2004:8).

Initial Research Aims and Objectives

With these factors in mind, the overarching aim of our preliminary research, conducted in 2008 was to explore student attitudes towards various potential models for the production of an undergraduate e-journal, with a view to module development within our own programme.

Within this aim, our initial research addressed the following objectives:

- To explore the models available for the development of e-journals and consider how best they might fit within the LJMU academic and technical frameworks.
- To determine how such a development could be made sustainable.
- To explore the possibility of developing a module in which students would take responsibility for submitting and reviewing articles for publication.

Methodology

As we initially planned to pilot the project within the Sociology programme, we conducted three focus groups with Level 3 Single Honours Sociology and Joint Honours Criminology/Sociology and History/Sociology students and a further five with Level 2 students on the same programmes.

To initiate the discussions in the focus group research we demonstrated the Biolog-e journal from the Bio-sciences department at the University of Leeds and presented the students with two models of how an e-journal might work: one without credit for existing first-class piece of work, the other as a 12 or 24 credit year-long module.

We also informally interviewed with staff in the School of Social Science about their perceptions of potential benefits and pitfalls of an e-journal and conducted a telephone interview with Dr. Celia Knight from the Biosciences Department at the University of Leeds and editor of Biolog-e.

Findings

The full range of findings was presented in James & Standing (2008). For the purposes of this article, they have been summarised below.

Student Views

We had initially assumed that students would prefer the idea of a module which would award their efforts with 12 or 24 credits. However, those we asked viewed this idea with suspicion (particularly among Level 3 students, who were most focussed on likely marks) and raised a number of important issues that would need to be resolved. Negative responses from students were clustered around the areas of purpose (for those not intending to pursue an academic career), workload, and equity within and between modules, as well as the relative weight and value of the inputs from staff and other students. A key concern related to the mode of assessment and whether the emphasis would be placed on the process, i.e. taking part in the module, or the product, i.e. would it be necessary to complete a publishable article by the end of the module.

The possibility of a module in this area most appealed to those students who placed a

premium on the value of the writing process itself and on the input from peers as well as staff. Finally, at a deeper level, one respondent pointed out that such a module could involve students in academic work and give them an insight into the social construction of knowledge, arguing that it would enable students to, "understand the stages and processes in the development of the knowledge they so often consume" (Level 3 Focus Group).

Even amongst students who were opposed to the idea of a specific module, positive attributes of e-journals were identified. Students acknowledged that publication in an e-journal would provide recognition for work of which they were justifiably proud. Even those who believed that their work was unlikely to reach this standard thought that this was important. Students also pointed out that the e-journal would allow them to compare the standard of their own efforts to first class work, as one group stated: "[p]revious work helps put your work into perspective". They pointed out that although some modules use marking exercises to help students understand the requirements for different levels of work, it was rare for them to have the opportunity chance to read first class essays, dissertations, reviews, etc.

Staff Views

The concerns of the members of staff we spoke to largely mirrored those of the students in terms of workload, inputs and assessment. Additionally, staff raised the issue of how the need for extensions and Personal Mitigating Circumstances claims could best be dealt with, particularly if the assessment process included groupwork. Finally, the problem of plagiarism was highlighted. However, an open access e-journal carries no more risks than other electronic sources (Knight, 2008) and plagiarism detection software and staff expertise can be used to check potential articles.

Launching the journal

Taking all these issues and ideas into account, we designed the format for the e-journal. It became clear from the responses of the Sociology students that it would not be possible to proceed with an e-journal based within a single programme. Equally, it seemed likely that a Level 3 module focussing on the production of a journal would be unlikely to recruit sufficient numbers to be viable. For these reasons, the model of a staff-led, non-credit e-journal was chosen. This was then discussed at a School Management Team meeting and suggestions for first-class pieces of work were elicited. At this point we also worked with the LJMU web team to devise a structure that would fit both ljmu and our own requirements. We now work with Clare Ryan in our own School to update the e-journal as it progresses.

The first issue of the journal, now entitled e-merge, was launched during Induction Week in 2009. Posters were displayed around our building and postcards produced for distribution to students. A rolling Powerpoint presentation was shown during the informal lunchtime events for freshers and the authors were invited to view the publication of their work. The first two issues of e-merge are now available at **http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/SOC/E-merge/index.htm**

Challenges and dilemmas

There are a number of issues that we have faced during the production process of e-merge:

- Copyright / Licence to publish. Developing the wording of a Licence to publish agreement took longer than expected. This issue has also proved an obstacle for other e-journals (Knight, 2008)

- Access: there was a debate concerning the appropriateness of open or password protected access. We believe that the journal can fulfil a wide range of functions through open access.

■ Plagiarism: there were concerns among staff that the e-journal could increase the possibilities for plagiarism. However, the internet already affords many possibilitiesi and there is software available to detect transgressions.

■ Inclusion: some programmes in the School embraced the e-journal with more enthusiasm than others. We felt that it was important in the first issues that all subject areas should be represented. This resulted in some disappointment for students whose work was not chosen, although as Walkington & Jenkins (2008) point out, this is a realistic outcome in the world of publishing. Other editorial teams have faced this same dilemma (Metcalfe, 2007).

■ The route taken in response to the issue of inclusion has a further impact on the length and tone of editorials. The early editorials in Biolog-e, for example, are addressed largely to students whereas those for Reinvention address a wider academic audience (Metcalfe, 2007).

■ Style: as the School includes a number of different disciplines with their own referencing styles and conventions we decided against adopting a single style, at least in initial issues.

■ Timing: we realised that this was crucial in order to initiate and maintain contact with student authors especially after they had graduated.

■ Editing / drafting process: some pieces of work were more easily adapted into an article format than others. It has to be recognised that even amongst first class work, some will be better written or of a higher standard than others. The level of intervention is therefore a dilemma for editors. Whilst some journals recognise the gap between first class undergraduate and publishable work and deliberately opt for a showcase for the former (see, for example, Uttley, 2008), we have worked with our student authors to improve their writing and structure where required.

Positive Feedback

Despite these challenges and dilemmas, we have been heartened by the positive responses we have had from staff and students.

■ Student-authors have been pleased to see their work published.

■ Other students have commented that it is interesting to see what the student authors had achieved and gain a sense of "what a first looks like".

■ Level Three students are now contacting us independently if they receive a first class mark for coursework.

■ Growing staff awareness means that more potential articles are being sent to us.

■ Several students have progressed to post-graduate study & their publication is now part of their academic cv.

■ The range of work being suggested for publication is growing more varied, for example book reviews, open book exams

Ways forward

As we prepare the third issue of e-merge for publication, we are also looking to the future. Our own experienced, combined with on-going examination of the cases of other journals, has led us to identify the following as necessary and/or potential future developments:

■ Continue expanding awareness of the journal throughout the School. Our School is currently being restructured, merging with programmes from the School of Media, Critical and Creative Arts. This brings a new dimension to our e-journal title. We have begun to talk with colleagues about the shape e-merge may take in the future.

■ It may also be possible to expand the e-journal beyond our institutional boundaries. Several e-journals now draw on work from partner institutions, or have a national scope (Walkington & Jenkins, 2008).

■ Embedding e-merge throughout the School curriculum. A comprehensive list of strategies to enable this process can be found in Walkington and Jenkins (2008). As e-merge was introduced to incoming students last academic year, we intend to target methodology modules to build on this awareness. This may then focus students' minds on possible publication when engaging in extended pieces of work in their final year. Gresty and Edwards (2009) argue that reviews of e-journal activity tend to stress the significance of the writing and dissemination processes, whereas the articles themselves have a further purpose in 'supporting teaching activities'. We also have plans to use the published articles as readings within a range of modules, so that students work with and value past contributions.

■ We are still hopeful that it will prove possible to develop a module within which students could develop their writing and reviewing skills, particularly when a case can be made for these as part of work-related learning initiatives both for students who are aiming for an academic career and for those with other aspirations.

■ At the moment, the e-journal articles have been adapted from dissertations, essays and reports. We intend to incorporate of wider range of assessment types to be included such as independent studies using visual media, wikis, etc. This would enable us to take full advantage of the e-journal format and the technology available.

■ Interest from staff and students has also led to the option of themed 'special editions' featuring, for example, work-related learning. We also intend to utilise the opportunities afforded by links with partner institutions abroad.

Conclusion

The e-merge e-journal has so far proved to be an innovative and welcome addition to the school and provides an opportunity to further embed research informed teaching in the undergraduate programmes.

Childs et al (2007) have argued that a successful relationship between research and teaching would involve: 'student engagement from induction to graduation, individually and in groups, in research and enquiry into disciplinary, professional and community-based problems and issues, including involvement in knowledge exchange activities' (cited in Healey et al, 2010: 237). Access to the opportunities to publish work is a crucial stage in this process, and e-merge provides an avenue to introduce students to the publication process.

However, questions hover over the long-term sustainability of e-merge. The current climate of cuts in Higher Education budgets is not propitious, either locally or nationally. Nevertheless, we plan to continue publishing the e-journal for as long as possible and to continue to expand on the range of student work it publishes.

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Thoughts on Mentoring

John McCormick

Introduction

I have been asked to give some reflections on mentoring. I was a subject mentor, then a professional mentor and now I train mentors. But I don't actually do a lot of mentoring, so it is not easy for me to reflect on how well I do it. Nevertheless, I think mentoring skills are still important to me in my working life. More of this later; for now here are my thoughts.

From Mentor to McBer.

When reading about mentoring I found it difficult to get away from Greek mythology. I was informed quite a few times that ancient Greece provided us with the word *mentor*. Before Odysseus left Ithica to take part in the Trojan wars he chose his wise and trusted friend Mentor to guide, teach and protect his son Telemachus and it is from this that the word mentor originates. Many of the papers I read left things there. However, it can be argued that it was not until some two and a half millennia later, when the French author Fenelon assigned a prominent role to Mentor in the 1699 book *Les Adventures de Telemaque*, (Roberts, 1999), that the stage was set for *mentor* to become the word for a more experienced and usually older adult who helps a younger person to navigate the adult world. Even so, according to Reiss (1992) Fenelon wrote trying to encapsulate the essence of the ideal state and, with a particular audience in mind, he made Mentor critical of the then political, social and cultural status of France. Fenelon's description of Mentor's activity does not match our present understanding of the mentoring role and it was some time after Fenelon's publication that words such as mentoring became used to describe what we now understand the mentor-mentee relationship to mean. Colley (2000) cites various sources and models of work, such as apprenticeships, to suggest it was not until the 20th Century before we arrived at relationships which can perhaps be summed up by a mid-century dictionary definition of mentor – a "*wise counsellor*" (Geddie, 1952).

However, Colley (2000) asserts that Mentor really did not do well in supporting Telemachus. The Trojan war dragged on and Odysseus was delayed in his return for many years. During this time Ithica fell into disarray, Mentor was discredited and it took the intervention of the goddess Athene to ensure that Ithica was not destroyed. This is an important point – Athena took on the role of Mentor not to ensure the development of Telemachus but to ensure the maintenance of the status quo, and, in particular, the restoration of Odysseus to the throne. To Colley the intervention of Athene forms the first of four stages in the development of mentoring, all of which depend on, to a greater or lesser extent, the transmission of cultural capital, and her historical perspective provides examples where mentoring operates as an activity carried out by the powerful so they can preserve their own social status. Colley is not alone in holding this view; Mincemoyer *et al* (1998) hint at the transmission of cultural capital in a business context, stating that mentors are higher ranking, influential senior organization members who are committed to providing upward mobility and support to a protégé's career and that they, their protégé and the organization all gain from this relationship. Darwin (2000) writes of a contest between those who construct mentoring a within

a functionalist perspective, with the aim of achieving efficiency, and those who consider it a matter of social justice. Thus the phrase "*wise counsellor*" may be inappropriate; modern mentoring may well have its have its roots in the maintenance of status and power and not in the development of people in a Rogerian, self-fulfilment sense. As such, it favours certain classes and groups, notably white upper-class males. Colley maintains that status-focussed relationships remain to this day and that they can be seen within state-sponsored models in, for example, the ConneXions service and pupil mentors in schools. This begs the questions "Does the mentor-mentee relationship within initial training have the maintenance of the status quo at its core?"

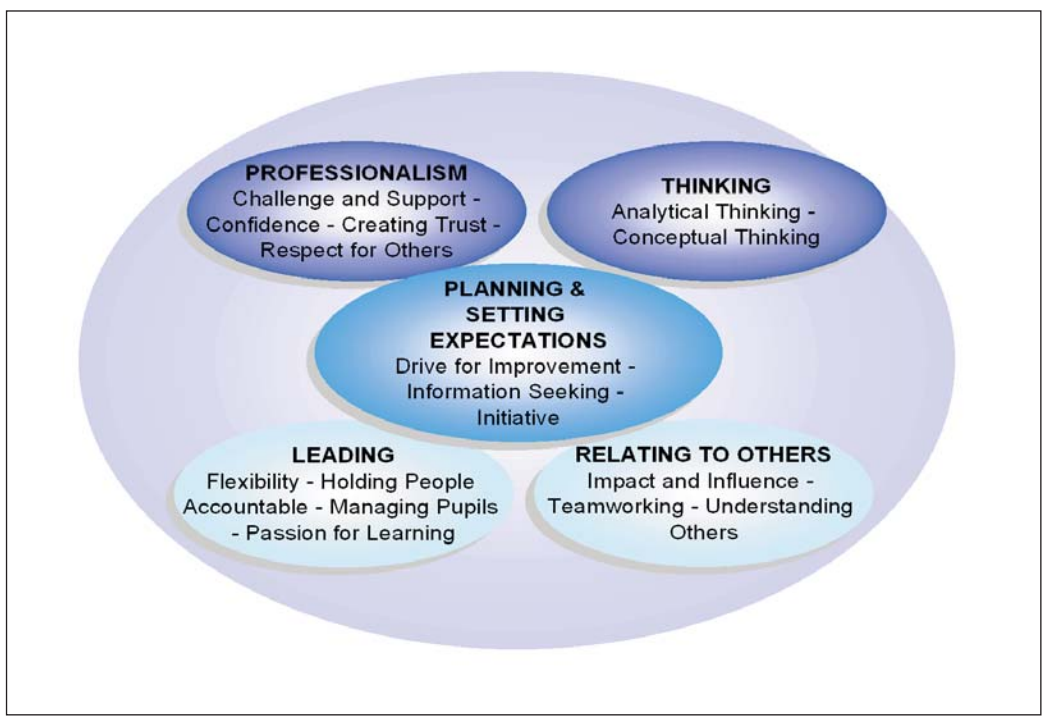
My perception is that mentors do transmit cultures - I have encountered too many stressed trainees who have succeeded in a first placement and then struggled with new mentors when adjusting to a second to believe otherwise - but I do not believe that maintaining the status quo is prominent in the mentoring role within initial teacher training. One reason is that the trainee teacher will very probably not remain as a member of the organisation and that this is known as the outset; another is that in teacher training mentors also carry out an assessment role, using externally generated standards, and there are mechanisms to support them and to achieve consistency in judgements. These factors mean that mentors, despite very strong allegiances to their schools, are not focussed solely on their parent organisation and its culture. They derive significant satisfaction from producing teachers who do meet the Professional Standards and they are able to interpret these quite objectively and impartially.

The assessment and gatekeeping role of teacher trainers illustrate some of the differences between mentoring in teacher training and the more business-focussed models identified by Colley and Mincemoyer *et al*. Such differences appear to be structural, in that they occur within a framework which persists across schools, and this structure does appear to have an impact. Jones *et al* (2005) investigated mentors' and mentees' perceptions within initial teacher training and certain sectors of the National Health Service. They noted that while there was a diversity of definitions and perceptions, and idiosyncratic and inconsistent practice which included, for example, nurturing, pedagogical, learner-centred and structural aspects, within the context of teacher training there was a shift of emphasis from the personal to the professional, where mentors have a distinct training role, and where external influences are prominent. (One aspect they did not appear to consider was the impact of OFSTED, whose inspection regime(s) have done much to ensure mentors in different schools behave consistently). The conclusion I draw is there are differences between teacher training and business models of mentoring.

Perhaps these differences matter. The Professional standards for teachers aim to produce reflective practitioners (see, for example, Q7a in the 2007 Professional Standards) with a certain level of competence. This might not be the case in industry, which can, perhaps, tolerate a greater level of inconsistency. Therefore, given the "professionalisation" of mentoring in initial training, might there be an overarching set of principles to guide the mentors and their trainees? Might there be sets of skills which can be developed and applied so as to produce reflective practitioners? In other words, are there skills which do something more than ensuring the transmission of culture, skills which result in practitioners who are capable of defining their own terms of reference and moving cultural boundaries? This is not to say such skills would not be useful in business, but they may not always be necessary.

In teacher training such skills will be inseparable from the role of the mentor. Jones *et al* (2005) have yet to report in full but their tentative findings are that both mentors and mentees see the role of adviser as the most important aspect of mentoring, and that mentees also see the mentor's role as a "supporter". Within this context mentors also need to be approachable and friendly, and capable of giving detailed, clear advice and guidance in a constructive, rather than critical way. However, while Jones *et al* did consider mentoring as a reflective practice their findings suggest developing reflective practice did not feature highly on mentees' agendas. The same may be the case with mentors. Berliner (1994) identifies 5 stages of teacher development, from novice, via competent, to expert. Novices do not have a set of context-free rules and need support to develop them through reflection. However, while mentors at Berliner's *competent* stage can determine what is and is not important and know from experience what to attend to and what can wait they don't always find it easy to reflect on situations, even though they can deal with them quite adequately. Berliner's *experts* don't seem to be reflective because things generally go smoothly for them and they go with the flow, with no need to think about what went wrong. When they need to they can analyse and advise very well but this does not mean they will necessary help their trainees to reflect. We will return to this later.

Aspects of mentoring such as advising and supporting can be found within the "Professional Characteristics" identified by Hay McBer in 2000 and, in particular, within the areas of "professionalism" and "relating to others".



http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/1487/haymcber.doc, accessed April 2009

These professional characteristics are possessed by effective teachers and it is these people, surely, which the profession wants to be mentors. However, Hay McBer did not present a static "one-size-fits-all" model of effectiveness and noted that different combinations of characteristics within these clusters can be equally effective [at promoting pupil progress]. If effective teachers show "*distinctive combinations of characteristics that create success for their pupils*" (Hay McBer, 2000, section 1.3.2) it is difficult to argue that the situation is different when the same teachers apply themselves to trainees. Hay McBer therefore appear to provide an answer about underlying principles - there are principles and skills but there is no single way of being an effective mentor. Hay McBer might also provide answers about transmission of culture. The report maintains that those teachers who are flexible, who are willing to challenge and to seek answers outside their immediate environment, and who embrace change, are likely to be effective. Not all mentors fit this description but anecdotal evidence suggests many of the most effective mentors relish the role because of the challenges and ideas brought by new entrants to the profession. It seems likely that in these circumstances transmission of the existing culture will not have a high priority.

All of this has implications for mentor development. A key point of the Hay McBer report was that teachers are made, not born, and that appropriate training will help them to develop in desired ways. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that training will help teachers to develop those skills which are required for the role of mentor, and in addition, that such training will help trainee teachers to get the support they need in becoming reflective.

From CUREE to confidence

However, when it comes to detail and practical suggestions for skill development Hay McBer has less to offer. A better source is CUREE, the centre for the use of research and evidence in education. CUREE has undertaken or reviewed much research into the skills required by mentors, and has a more informed perspective of mentoring than the reviews provided by Colley, by Jones *et al* and by dictionary definitions:

Mentoring is a sustained, structured process for supporting professional learners through significant career transitions. (CUREE, 2005)

CUREE's concepts appear to complement and certainly do not contradict Hay McBer's "Professional characteristics" - there is much correspondence between the two - but the CUREE findings have been crystallised in a set of principles, core concepts and a framework for coaching and mentoring. There is not space for consideration of these in depth; the next section of this paper therefore considers some of these principles and illustrates how they might be put into practice so as to demonstrate their usefulness and purpose.

According to CUREE, effective mentoring involves a thoughtful relationship.

Earlier in this paper I outlined the possibility that trainees might find the transition between two different school cultures difficult. This is just one example of the issues faced by mentors. A quick survey of the literature indicates that trainees feel anxious at the start of any placement: *Student teachers… …are extremely anxious about their relative lack of knowledge…* (Wragg and Wood,1994, p.117). What is not always conveyed so clearly is that their emotional state will vary throughout the course and be influenced by, for example, physical tiredness, family circumstances or the need to complete an

assignment. Effective mentors will be aware of this and will provide support which is appropriate to the trainee's situation. This requires trust, respect and sensitivity to the *"powerful emotions involved in deep professional learning"* (CUREE, 2005, p.2), which must be conveyed through behaviour and through *learning conversations*, which, for me, are at the heart of any mentoring relationship in ITE.

I first came across the phrase "learning conversation" in something from the GTC, in a context which resulted in me paying it scant heed because of a lack of credibility. I believe this situation could apply to other teacher trainers and to teachers. But I've thought about what goes on behind the phrase and I now believe learning conversations are powerful agents for change. The CUREE framework will tell you that a learning conversation is *"structured professional dialogue, rooted in evidence from the professional learner's practice, which articulates existing beliefs and practices to enable reflection on them"*. (CUREE, 2005, p2) But within this there is, to steal from the world of chess, a pool from which a gnat may drink and in which an elephant may drown. So how mentors and trainees go about the conversation is crucial. This includes time and venue, which feedback from trainees suggests are given scant consideration in some placements, but what goes on in the conversation is most important.

Within a learning conversation itself the key elements have to be body language, listening and questioning. In the first place the mentor needs to be sensitive to their own and to the trainee's body language. Is it open and potent? Is it closed and defensive? In this case what can the mentor do to address this and to build trust and confidence? One thing is "active listening", which requires the mentor to concentrate on what is being said and, conversely, to value and respect silence. This sounds easy but, as any double glazing salesperson will tell you, people find it hard to remain silent and tend to fill in spaces themselves. If you are in this position you must give your mentee space. Only when you are both ready can you move on, and you should aim to do so through something called *"clean questioning"*. Like many teachers and trainers I'm familiar with open and closed questions, Bloom's taxonomy, etc, - I teach trainees about them and have written directed tasks to develop questioning skills, - but *"clean questioning"* fascinated me when I considered it in depth; it added a new dimension and really made me think about what questions do, and how well I used them. This isn't to say that the idea was new to me - it was very similar to *"procedural neutrality"*, which I first came across in the early 1970s and which appears to have had a new lease of life with the teaching of PSHE. The point of procedural neutrality is to assign no moral viewpoint to the teacher during discussion of moral or ethical issues. In a similar vein, clean questions provide no viewpoint in themselves. They are designed to elicit more information from the respondent, to allow her or him to reflect on situations, or to elaborate on an answer or to provide more detail without compromising any position. Anyone who has had child protection training will be familiar with this idea.

"Clean questioning" appears to start from the premise that questions, including open questions, are not usually value free. When we ask something we often do so in a way which conveys our understanding, or provides our viewpoint. The questioner thus risks compromising the questioned. Clean questions avoid this. Consider the following scenario, putting yourself in the position of questioner.

During discussion the person you are talking to mentions an incident involving a person you know.

Have you conjured up a mental picture of the person? Of the incident? You very probably have. It could be from a previous experience of your own, or from something someone else said previously. How you got the mental picture does not matter. What does matter is that it is yours and not the respondent's. You cannot let it impose upon the conversation. Clean questioning demands that you do not ask "Did this happen?" or "He's like that" Your questions have to allow the respondent to offer more information about their incident. So you might ask "Do you want to say anything about the incident?", or in response to further information "What was it that made it this way?".

Clean Questioning sounds straightforward but it isn't. It is natural to empathise with people and in doing so to share your own experience with them, and it takes practice to be able to maintain a neutral stance. But staying neutral has benefits. It enables the respondent to produce material and to think about it, so it develops reflection. It enables this material to be examined more objectively, and this promotes trust and builds the relationship. It allows recovery from "lost" positions by removing some of the emotion surrounding them and it allows the implementation of a formative process known as the GROW model (Whitmore, 2002) in which the mentee takes increasing responsibility for their own professional development, which is another of the key principles in the CUREE framework. The GROW model has the following structure and readers of this paper might consider how the above scenario could be continued using "clean questions" within it

G = goals. Agree goals with your mentee

R = reality. What is happening, Is the goal achievable? What barriers are there to progress?

O = options. What is available. Ask, don't tell. Let the mentee determine the path

W= What (is to be done) by Whom, and When. Ask questions which allow the mentee to identify specific steps. Don't tell her or him how or what to do. (from Whitmore, 2002, p54)

"Clean Questioning" is just one facet of one skill within the CUREE Framework. There is not the space within this paper to address the other skills. However, experienced practitioners should be able, through this illustration, to appreciate the subtlety and richness of mentoring skills, to reflect on their applicability to their own circumstances and to consider the benefits of engaging with the framework.

From mentors to managers

This brings me back to the start of this paper and to my concluding point. Reflection leads me to believe that I don't need to worry about unwittingly transmitting culture. However, I'm not as skilled a mentor as I thought I was, or as I would like to be. Given that I now do very little mentoring it could be argued that this does not matter. But I think it does. I work with people and through people, and I try to adhere to the Rogerian principles of congruence, empathy and respect to support self actualization (Boeree, 2009). Some of the skills I need, those which might be described as "people skills", are those outlined in they Hay McBer report and articulated in the CUREE framework. I would say the situation is the same for many colleagues, here and in schools, and we all could benefit by engagement with mentor skills training.

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Contents

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