



ESCalate Newsletter

Issue 5 ♦ Summer 2006

New Academic Resolution: Let's get out more!

I'm sure that I am speaking to the converted on the whole but as another academic year has the end in sight I'd like to suggest a new academic resolution to consider for when the time comes: could we all get out more, be more involved and so share more of our valuable expertise and experience with others?

Conferences, workshops, seminars. Involvement with them is always additional to our already hectic working week based in our various departments dotted across the UK. We hear about such events and may scan their themes and list of speakers - and may feel more than a little interest, but getting to them is costly in terms of effort, time and organisation. Unless we are presenting a paper it is so easy to dismiss them because we just don't think we can make the time.

Perhaps the easiest to dismiss are those events that don't have our own subject specialism as a direct focus. Such was the case with the recent conference, This Learning Life, which brought together well-known figures from many walks of life to reflect on their learning lives, and invited the delegates to consider with them the practical future of education and what the life stories and experiences shared over the course of the three day event might mean for teaching and learning in

schools and colleges. Despite such a broad remit, some attendees said it was the best conference they had been to in years.

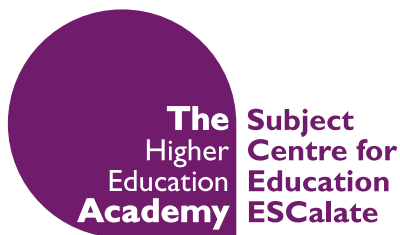
The list of speakers was extraordinarily diverse! They included the ex Secretary of State for Education Estelle Morris, Professor Jonathan Drori (Director of Culture Online), scientists Professor Robert Winston and Professor Kathy Sykes, retired England and Gloucestershire cricketer Mark Alleyne, FA Youth Coach John Allpress, British Chess Champion Jonathan Rowson and up-and-coming youth band The Naturals. In addition there were keynotes and on-going reflections from across the pond with Professor David Perkins (Harvard) talking baseball and 'the whole game' - including the importance of playing out of town, i.e. getting away from our usual environment - and Professor Shirley Brice Heath from Stanford sharing about the 'Food Project'. In addition, Tom Bentley (Director of the UK think-tank, Demos) and others from theatre and dance offered insights too!

It quickly became obvious, that as well as the unusual range of speakers, the event was setting out to offer a fresh approach to presentations through what it termed 'Learning conversations'. These were informal interviews with the speakers which meant as a...

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(Left to right) Teresa, Liz, Tony, Julie and Jane

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Please look at our website for opportunities.

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An electronic version of this newsletter is available on the ESCalate website.

This newsletter is available free of charge. If you do not currently receive a copy and wish to do so in the future please contact heacademy-escalate@bristol.ac.uk. Your details will only be used for keeping you informed of ESCalate activity and will not be made available to outside organisations.

If you have any ideas or copy that you would like to see included in a future newsletter please get in touch.

We are especially interested in items which:

- ◆ Show innovative practice in your Education Department;
- ◆ Celebrate National Teaching Fellows and other awards for teaching and learning;
- ◆ Showcase student achievement.

New Academic Resolution: Let's get out more!

By Dr Julie Anderson, ESCalate, April 2006

result, they were particularly engaging and accessible.

Thus, household names who had excelled in various fields, reflected off the record, not on their subject expertise but on the general ways of learning they had adopted through life, offering us candid and often moving accounts of their own learning. Yet, although unique, what also came across was that whatever the background or field of expertise there were many things in common.

Each of the delegates no doubt took away something different. I wrote reams of notes but on reflection, it was some of the apparently incidental events that perhaps had the most to remind and teach me too. For example, it was obvious that the successful people there as speakers were risk takers and were not only willing to learn new things but were active in making sure they did - even if they looked foolish on the journey! So it was that one eminent professor was persuaded to play us a few notes on his saxophone, having only been learning 10 days (*and only had it with him because he was going from the conference to his next lesson!*). Another main speaker, on hearing the dancer Rosemary Lee telling us how she got children dancing within five minutes of starting a lesson called out asking if Rosemary could get us all dancing now! It surely displayed a readiness for learning that was exemplary?

But what of life post conference? As ever, as one colleague said to me after the event, to 'get out of the box' is always refreshing and helpful in terms of reflection on our own roles wherever we work. However, the main point of this short piece is not to cause anyone to regret missing this event but to encourage us



Richard Layzell, a performance artist who spoke at 'This Learning Life'.

again to keep being as involved as we can with the education community at large.

A substantial part of ESCalate's work revolves around our engagement with colleagues in Education departments and this is affected when calls to the community bring only a limited response. For example, we remain indebted to those who were so helpful in making themselves available at meetings and via email to offer advice on the construction of the relatively new External Examiner's database/ register for education. Yet only recently we were contacted by a colleague who felt their field of expertise was sidelined within it. They hadn't come forward to help us early on in the work and although we trust we can rectify their concerns, it would have been easier for our webdesigner if we'd known from the start!

The main ESCalate team across the three sites and through additional colleagues working with us ad hoc contains a vast range of expertise - but we are always dependent on others being willing to be involved to offer specialist advice and ideas too. Perhaps you want to see other events and workshops organised that are not currently planned? Perhaps you would value help and support in starting a new network? We do again invite you to get in touch and wherever possible, ideas

will be taken forward. Whether you consider yourselves key players or not, participation at all levels is crucial to sharing good learning and teaching across the UK, the main remit of ESCalate as well as all the subject centres.

In conclusion then, whether or not we do manage 'to get out more', we could surely aim to try to be in touch more, find contribute or access some new resources through the ESCalate or other websites*, read more new authors** and try new approaches to keep ourselves like the professor mentioned above, always eager to learn which in turn will surely translate into additional enthusiasm for learning for our students.

* We are always delighted to hear of good resources to add to the ESCalate website for others to access. Please email Jane.Tuffill@bris.ac.uk

** Why not review a book for ESCalate - and of course you get to keep the book. See the website for details.

If you are a new lecturer in the first three years of working in HE/FE and would like to go to an event or conference but are limited because of funds, please apply to ESCalate with a short summary of your reasons for wanting to attend - and be willing to write us an article and offer resources after the event. Email Julie.Anderson@bristol.ac.uk for details.

If you would like to access resources from the conference used to illustrate above, which is expected to include video coverage of some of the presentations, please access www.bris.ac.uk/education/whats_on/conferences/thislearninglife

On the Rock Face... Rule of Engagement

Wendy Belk was last year's winner of the ESCalate Higher Education Academy Subject Centre Network Student Award, which she entered whilst studying for her Community Education Postgraduate Certificate at Strathclyde University. Having completed her studies in the spring (2005), she has secured work with a voluntary sector organisation, training and assessing other students in Community Development Work.



This is her second article in a series of three following Wendy's progress as she returns to the world of work and attempts to put her newfound knowledge into practice...

"Before setting off on a climb, always warm up first by bouldering about at a lower level."

The course began back in October last year. I have always felt nervous before commencing work with a new group and this new role as trainer for SVQs¹ in Community Development Work was no exception.

I need not have worried. The group consisted of ten extremely motivated and enthusiastic members, all committed to learning and developing both themselves and others. Nevertheless it was still important to break the ice and, as the first day dawned bright and sunny, we left the training room and went to work outside on the lawn. I firstly set the team a communication challenge (to fit the group inside ever-decreasing rope shapes on the ground) followed by a group trust-building exercise, when each person takes it in turn to fall and be supported by his/her peers. Within an hour the group was relaxed and interacting well.

"When leading a climb, plan each move carefully before executing it."

For the first couple of weeks I was extremely organised. I always arrived early at the training venue, allowing myself enough time to set up the room to make it conducive to learning, to read over and finalise my notes and to prepare the handouts.

Unfortunately this was not to last and I soon found myself having to 'wing it' through some of the sessions!

"Learning how to best select and apply the correct safety gear to protect the lead climber in case of a fall is vital. However, if the climber has decided to solo the climb, awareness of mind and body is the most important tool at his/her disposal."

The phrase 'winging it' suggests a lack of preparedness and a lack of quality but sometimes it can't be helped and sometimes too it can more easily help the trainer to be open to changing tack at a moment's notice. This happened on one occasion a couple of weeks into the training programme. We were discussing how the students might tackle cases of discrimination exhibited by community groups with whom they were working. The students were getting bogged down with the theory and I suddenly experienced a moment of clarity. Making up a scenario on the spot (that "a local youth centre, situated within an area of cultural diversity, was experiencing regular racist incidents"), I split the group into sub working groups and asked them to debate the scenario before coming up with their own take on how they might tackle the situation. This basic but useful tool enabled me to empower the students into finding their own solutions, whilst also buying me some time in which



to gather my own thoughts and responses.

"Finally the climber must remember that for all her preparation and skill, the climbing will always contain an element of risk."

For me educating is like climbing. You must conquer your initial fears, plan and prepare for every eventuality when possible, but in the end you must embrace the unexpected. Only then will you truly inspire!

Next Time: Topping Out...

¹ Scottish Vocational Qualifications

What is ESCalate Initial Teacher Education?

After teaching for many years and pursuing research into school effectiveness and teacher identity, I started work as ESCalate ITE co-ordinator in November 2005, based in St Martin's College. I proudly proclaimed my new title to friends, family and ex-colleagues and enjoyed their congratulations. But then they looked at me expectantly, evidently bewildered by the impressive acronyms and expecting a brief description of my new trade. When I smiled happily back avoiding their quizzical look, they quietly ventured, 'yes, but what do you actually do?' I declined to give more than a few murmured long words and more acronyms which seem to satisfy them that they didn't really want to know! But I did and so, I am sure, do you!

Well, what is it that the ESCalate ITE team actually do and what is it that we have done that has convinced me in a few short months of the value of ESCalate's work and the huge potential that the Initial Teacher Education ESCalate project has to offer to develop and serve the teacher educator community?

We are Dr Sue Bloxham, our manager, Dr Sam Twiselton, our Head of ITE, Kate Wenham, our administrator and me. We identify priorities in Initial Teacher Education from our own work in St Martin's, from across Initial Teacher Education institutions, from government policy and from liaising with agencies such as the Training and Development Agency (TDA), the University Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) and the Teacher Training Resource Bank (TTRB). We are developing links with Initial Teacher Education across the four nations of the UK and are very keen to reflect initiatives in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, as well as England. We are interested in international

examples of good practice in teacher education and global issues, such as those represented by the Manchester Development Education Project. We support innovation and research through publications, through our website, through a highly successful programme of seminars and through an annual conference. We are anxious to work with other subject centres to create a coherent and unique service for the Higher Education community.

Some specific examples of our work since November 2005 have been: contributing to Initial Teacher Educators in the TDA consultation on the review of standards for classroom teachers; representation at the UCET conference in 2005 and plans in place for further work with UCET in a PGCE M level networking seminar and workshops at their next annual conference; work with Bristol and Stirling ESCalate partners to co-ordinate the education subject centre work; liaising with other subject centres at the Higher Education Academy conference; publication of conference proceedings which bring together a range of papers with themes as diverse as 'Creativity outside convention' and 'Desktop video conferencing'; an extremely well attended and well received seminar on preparing students for working in 'challenging schools'; another extremely well attended and well received seminar, this time on becoming a new teacher educator; a very successful seminar on four-year Qualified Teacher Status foundation degrees; support for research into encouraging independent learning; support for research into self evaluation in Initial Teacher Training; a call for papers for our annual conference for which the overwhelming response gave proof of the need for, and value of, the ESCalate ITE service.

I am tempted now to write 'etc!' The scope of what we have done and the opportunities which present themselves for the future seem boundless (except when ideals are confounded by time and funding!). Perhaps some comments from teacher educators this year best sum up what we hope we are about; 'thought-provoking', 'challenging', 'stimulating', 'it made me reconsider'. There is a real feeling that ESCalate ITE's work goes some way to decreasing the isolation that can so easily be felt in a large institution; you know that you are not working alone and that there are others out there facing the same challenges, frustrations and inspirations and eager to collaborate for mutual benefit.

ESCalate ITE is most definitely a 'service' for the Initial Teacher Education community and as such wants to provide what initial teacher educators want. I will let one comment from one teacher educator at a recent seminar lead the way to the future; 'Keep going! There's so little INSET for us!' We mostly certainly will and look forward to your suggestions and questions. In this way we can provide a unique and distinctive service for the teacher education community and fulfil our obligation to advance learning and teaching in teacher education and to enhance the student learning experience with the ultimate aim of improving our schools for the next generations of children.

Alison Jackson
ESCalate ITE Co-ordinator

Links to ESCalate ITE are:
www.escalate.ac.uk/stmartins,
and by email
escalate@ucsm.ac.uk and
a.g.jackson@ucsm.ac.uk

The Growth of the 'New Education Studies'

Professor Steve Bartlett is Reader in Education at the University of Wolverhampton. He has taught on and been involved in the development of Education Studies programmes for many years and is the current chair of BESA. Professor Diana Burton is Dean of the faculty of Education, Community and Leisure at Liverpool John Moores University. She has taught on both ITT and Education Studies programmes. Together they have written and edited several significant Education Studies texts published by Sage. All references and further information will be available online at www.escalate.ac.uk/publications under ESCalate Newsletter Articles.



Two years ago a small group of education studies lecturers from a range of Higher Education (HE) institutions came together to share experiences. From this initial meeting the idea of a subject network developed through which support, advice, pooling of resources and ideas could take place. It was hoped that this network could also provide a forum in which discussion of the nature and the development of the subject would occur. Thus the British Education Studies Association (BESA) was formed.



In an effort to make the theoretical and academic study of education more relevant to the needs of the student teachers many B.Ed programmes began to create a more integrated approach. This involved the development of what became known as curriculum, professional or even educational studies. In hindsight this can be seen as a significant point in the development of a specialist study of education.

Though still very much in its infancy the association has grown rapidly in the past 12 months. An initial colloquium on Education Studies was held at Hope University and the first national conference took place in July 2005 at the University of Chester. A second very successful colloquium was recently held at Trinity College, Carmarthen focusing, in the light of the recent Furlong Report (2006), on the future of Education Studies in relation to changes in ITT and also on the employability of education studies graduates. The second national conference is due to take place at Bishop Grosseteste College in early July 2006. So why does Education Studies warrant a national network? What can an Education Studies degree offer students and lecturers?

Historical background

In the past Education(al) Studies has been seen as very much part of the education/training of teachers. The study was effectively invented during the period of expansion in education post World War II, which created a demand for more high quality teachers. To meet this demand the teacher training courses at the colleges of education were lengthened and the Robbins Report (1963) declared an intent to develop teaching into an all-graduate profession. This heralded the creation of the new B.Ed. degree, which was comprised of a theoretical and practical study of education. As McCulloch (2002) pointed out the content of these new B.Ed. courses was largely created from a range of subjects already in existence at the validating universities. Thus the academic study of education came to be made up primarily of the sociology, psychology, philosophy and history of education.

It was from the 1980s onwards that the nature of teacher education changed drastically. With the emphasis becoming firmly placed on training, any traces of academic education(al) studies were removed from ITT programmes. However, shortly after the critical study of education disappeared from teacher training new programmes, called Education Studies, began to develop in the rapidly expanding HEFCE funded sector. We suggest a number of reasons for the rapid growth of this subject and its popularity amongst the student population.

The increase in student numbers entering HE and the concomitant development of modular degree programmes, allowing more flexibility in the choice of subjects studied, meant that Education Studies came to be seen as an important partner for a number of combinations. It took on a special significance for students planning careers that involved

working with people in a variety of contexts. Teaching is often the first that springs to mind but there are also personnel management, welfare and health services, retail, publishing and a range of others.

The recent trend for many students who intend to become teachers to take a first degree and then a PGCE rather than the traditional B.Ed has made Education Studies a more attractive part of that first degree. This changing landscape of teacher training has led to many schools of education seeking to diversify their portfolios making Education Studies an obvious addition from an institutional point of view. This trend will continue apace in the wake of funding council cuts in the number of initial teacher training student places.

The nature of Education Studies and why students find it so appealing

Students tend to become very involved in and committed to Education Studies perhaps because they all have comparatively long and varied experiences of education. They find that they are studying a subject in which they have been actively engaged that has had a significant impact upon their lives.

Whilst the Education Studies benchmarks (2000) provide a guide to those designing new courses, the structure and content of Education Studies programmes varies enormously. At the heart of all of these courses lies a critical analysis of key issues such as the nature of education, the content and development of curricula, teaching and learning, the relationship between ability, opportunity and success, and the policy issues encompassing all of these. Some people make the mistake, perhaps due to its



historical connection to teacher training, of seeing education studies as essentially school focused. This is certainly not the case as all areas and aspects of education can be included. The subject has enormous scope from the development of young children, through learning in HE, to the workplace and the third age – a true study of lifelong learning in fact. It is this opening up of the concept of education that students find so exciting. They are able to see its significance to so many aspects of individual and social life. It is a rediscovery of the critical approach to all areas of education that perhaps makes Education Studies so appealing to the many lecturers coming from the constraints of working in ITT.

The future of Education Studies

The rapid expansion of the subject over a comparatively short time has not been without its difficulties. The initial Education Studies courses often began on a very small scale. Practitioners tended to be isolated, working alone or in small teams, and as such the courses developed in very different ways depending upon institutional and regional circumstances. Whilst this rich diversity can be seen as a strength of the subject, the isolation of practitioners has

caused problems and for many academics their initial introduction to the subject still proves a steep learning curve as their newly validated programmes grow rapidly.

One notable aspect of many Education Studies programmes is how, evolving from the pedagogical background of teacher training and being situated in the new universities that are at the forefront of developing wider access to HE, they are very much involved in exciting new approaches to teaching and curriculum development. This can be seen in the range of new modules, the variety of innovative assessment techniques and the materials being produced to support student learning. For these reasons the benefits of networking become clear.

To find out more about the second BESA conference which will take place on the 30th of June and 1st July at Bishop Grosseteste College ring or e-mail Bev Deakin on 01522 583703, b.a.deakin@bgc.ac.uk or go to the conference web page on www.bgc.ac.uk following links for conferences and then BESA.

The BESA website is currently being designed and should be up and running in time for the conference. If meanwhile you wish to find out more about BESA please contact one of the following committee members: Steve Bartlett (s.bartlett@wlv.ac.uk) Dave Smith (smithd2@hope.ac.uk) Les Hankin (hankinl@hope.ac.uk) Steve Ward (s.ward@bathspa.ac.uk)

Research to Reality: The Challenges facing Early Childhood Studies

Written by Mary Wild, from Oxford Brookes University. Having joined Brookes in 2003 as a lecturer in child development and education, Mary is now Field Chair for Early Childhood Studies. As such, she co-ordinates the Early Childhood Studies undergraduate programme, as well as teaching across a range of modules within the programme. She also teaches on the Early Years Sector Endorsed Foundation Degree and the Primary PGCE (Early Years strand) and contributes to MA Supervision and to the CAPP programme. Materials from this conference are available online at www.escalate.ac.uk/1929



“Felt like scratching at the surface – because there is so much going on at the moment in so many different spheres – but the scratching has to be done!”

“Good range of key speakers addressing professionalism from different perspectives”

Just two of the comments received from those who attended a recent conference sponsored by the Early Childhood Studies Degree Network in collaboration with ESCalate. Entitled *Early Childhood Studies: Research to Reality: ECS Degree Quality and Professionalism*, the one day conference served as a timely opportunity to discuss the nature of professionalism in the Early Years workforce at a time when the sector is considering a plethora of Government consultations and initiatives. This significant challenge was highlighted at the outset of the day by the Conference Chair, Julie Fisher, who clearly established the purpose of the conference as to “extend debate and consider the issues” in “developing a new children’s workforce”.

The audience, drawn from a broad base of HE/FE, including students’ representatives, enjoyed keynote presentations from Baroness of Yardley (Estelle Morris) as Chair of the Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC); Dr Carmen Dalli, Director of the Institute for Early Childhood Studies at Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand and Angela Anning, Emeritus Professor for Early Childhood Education at the University of Leeds.

Dr Carmen Dalli was the opening key note speaker and gave the conference a valuable international perspective in her presentation “Reflecting on professionalism in early childhood education: views from New Zealand”. Dr Dalli was able to contextualise the UK debate by drawing on the New Zealand experience in developing a fully qualified early childhood sector over the past 20 years. In addition she presented data from a questionnaire survey of teachers from nearly 600 licensed child-care centres in New Zealand (2003) that sought to understand what the professionals themselves saw as professionalism within the EY sector. She concluded that though an agreed definition of professionalism “remains elusive”, a tentative model to emerge from the survey was of a professionalism that includes three crucial components: a clear articulation of pedagogic style that focuses on respectful relationships; the philosophy of collaboration and partnership; and the need for professionals to have a sound knowledge base around children and “the theory of early childhood”.

The second keynote speaker was Estelle Morris, who spoke in her capacity as Chair of the Children’s Workforce Development Council, which has a crucial role in the current

Government initiative to define the new “Early Years Professional” (EYP) role. Potentially a role with equivalent status to QTS, the Government aim is to have the first such professionals in post as early as December 2006. In this context, conference delegates were eager to discern how the CWDC viewed the new EYP role.



Estelle Morris and Julie Fisher

In fact Estelle Morris was keen to stress that the CWDC has an “openness of mind” about the definition of the role and that events such as the conference were an important forum in which to sample informed opinion. She emphasised that a key aspect might be the need to find a role that integrated the diverse ways in which professionals need to work with young children. This multi-professional dimension was something that she suggested was “something Early Years maybe has always done”. In acknowledging the complex and diverse nature of the existing EY workforce, Estelle

did not suggest a definitive blueprint as to how the new EYP role might unfold but she did stress the need for education *and* care to be key components. Though EY leaders would need to be individuals who understood the education agenda it was not “just a question of pushing learning earlier down” but those working with the 0–5 age range would need to have “a specialist body of knowledge” that understood the role of the diverse range of professionals working across the early years and of parents as “partners”.

The theme of multi-agency working was the focus for the third keynote speaker, Professor Angela Anning. Reporting on a joint ESRC/University of Leeds project, MATCh (Multi-Agency Teams Working for Children), she provided a detailed analysis of the practical and conceptual challenges that can arise when teams from different professional disciplines come



Conference delegates

together to work collaboratively. She spoke eloquently on the need for clarity and transparency across a range of aspects if such collaborative partnerships are to be effective. Aspects that need to be considered may be pragmatic, looking at existing structures and systems of the various partners, or ideological, involving the partner agencies in having a clear, shared aim and an awareness of the cultural contexts of each partner institution. In order to facilitate this there will need to be opportunities for reflection away from the “immediacy of

decision–making” to focus on building the new “team” and leadership of such projects will require leaders with both “vision and flexibility”.

A key feature of the success of the conference, was the combination of speakers with a broad range of backgrounds and perspectives on the concept of “professionalism” in the early years. As the second quotation above suggests, the professionalisation of the EY workforce, and the implications for the provision of education and training is a hugely complex and multi-faceted issue. The consensus of the evaluations received from the conference delegates was that this event had enabled some very productive debates and questions to emerge, debates which now need to continue. If you would like to be in contact with the Early Childhood Network, contact Pamela Calder p.calder@gmail.com

Academic Consultant - Dr Barbara Pavey

Learning Disabilities and Higher Education: the Duty to Promote Equality of Opportunity for Disabled People

Barbara Pavey (PhD), Academic Consultant

A selection of references and further information are listed here, more are available online at www.escalate.ac.uk/publications under ESCalate Newsletter Articles.

A widening understanding of special educational needs or learning disabilities, together with duties under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (itself constituting Part 4 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995), means that the world of Higher Education (HE) now necessarily embraces the diversity of learning needs. The

new duty to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people is part of the Disability Discrimination Act as amended in 2005, and comes into effect in December 2006. This duty takes further the responsibilities and practices already existent in HE under the 2001 Act and the widening participation agenda.

The new duty is linked to widening access and participation, and to the government target of 50 percent of students to enter into HE. Access courses and other non-discriminatory procedures are bringing into HE students who were not successful at school for a number of reasons, but who have motivation, commitment and life experience



on their side. Students from diverse backgrounds can do very well in their studies but when they have not succeeded at school there are barriers to overcome. A major barrier is lack of confidence and another is disability, which in addition to inherent difficulties can instigate a further lack of confidence.

Allen and Storan report that "An 18 year old with a disability or a health problem is 40% as likely to enter Higher Education as an 18 year old without a disability or health problem" (Allen and Storan 2005:4). The new duty implies that this is a waste of human and social capital which must be rectified.

Disabilities experienced by students include a range of learning characteristics that make varying aspects of learning difficult, but which can be overcome with constructive support. The situation is not helped by difficulties with terminology. The terms learning difficulty and learning disability can be used separately or interchangeably. Sometimes the terms are used to describe a general or 'global' learning difficulty. However in many contexts the terms are used to describe a specific learning need, the most common of which, in the HE setting, is dyslexia (Allen and Storan, op.cit.).

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines disability as "A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities and such impairments include the range of learning disabilities and mental health difficulties. While the learning characteristics of some students may be clear and well known, others may remain hidden, but the duties of the HE establishment remain the same."

Higher Education establishments have their own admissions policies and criteria, and the HE descriptors published within the framework for HE qualifications in England make clear the characteristics and expectations of different levels of study. There may be tensions between the new duty and existing admissions policies, and the QAA plus the Higher Education Academy are currently reviewing the Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education in order to accommodate this and other recent requirements in HE.

Different expectations may go some way towards being reconciled by the established duty to provide appropriate support through 'reasonable adjustments' or 'steps'. With such adjustments a student is expected to be able to proceed to successful completion of the programme of study. Although the nature of what constitutes a 'reasonable adjustment' is always likely to be open to discussion, useful guidance is provided by the Association of Dyslexia Specialists in Higher Education.

With the new duty, not just the willingness and ability to make 'reasonable adjustments' but also the practice must become routine in HE. Failing to make changes in line with this duty may be perilous; argument about whether or not appropriate provision, including 'reasonable adjustments' has been made, is now part of the fabric of education at all levels. It is likely that any HE establishment has, at any time, a number of cases pending where students or their parents have challenged an outcome on the basis that the education provided has not been appropriately devised to meet the learner's needs.

Once learning disabilities are acknowledged, it is sometimes

the case that practitioners eager to help students then wish to know as much as they can about the difficulties, and find themselves focusing upon the individual, medical model. This is after all where most of the information about learning difficulties and disabilities lies. But a focus on the individual model is not necessarily helpful and instead a focus upon improving the learning environment should be considered. This may suggest a number of practices that HE can take on as standard in order to support all its learners, with a particular effort made to meet the learning needs of students with known difficulties. With these measures in place the criterion of 'reasonable adjustments' is much more likely to be met, enabling HE to fulfil its responsibilities in supporting students with learning disabilities and in promoting equality of opportunity for disabled people.

References and further information:

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Pebble Power!

Julie Hughes, based in the School of Education, University of Wolverhampton, is a passionate user of and advocate for the e-portfolio as a learning and teaching tool to support engaged and reflective learning. Julie has been using the e-portfolio for the past two years with students from Foundation Degree level to CPD for teaching mentors. Julie's latest passion is blogging and harnessing the creativity supported by the e-portfolio system. Julie Hughes and her students (Yesaine Karim-Akhtar, Khalid Mahmood, Mark McDonald, Tess McDonald, Seamus McGuinness, Mandy Staunton, Emma Purnell, Liander Taylor and Jenny Woodhams) wrote this article



We joined the PGCE course in September virtual strangers, a group of 12 student teachers with similar goals and ambitions. Six months later it is amazing to see how far we have traveled as individuals and now as a group. Up mountains, down ski slopes, across the seas and along trenches – and all with a little help from the University's electronic portfolio, pebblePAD, an online learning and teaching environment.

Initially the thought of becoming reflective practitioners was a daunting one for the majority of the group. We had to make and share this transformation with a group of people we had only just met and use an e-portfolio we knew nothing about. Many of the group were apprehensive about adding an IT element to an already difficult task of reflecting, and fears were certainly expressed! We could never have imagined that the pebblePAD e-portfolio was to be one of the few constants in the following months of roller coaster change that we experienced, becoming a picture frame of our thoughts and experiences. The e-portfolio acted as a gateway through which we could address our individual and group developmental needs with the enhanced advantage of getting to know each other in a different way to other groups.

Using the web log as an online journal became a big part of our growth as reflective writers. Using the blog tool within the e-portfolio we could share thoughts, feelings, fears,

anxieties and excitement and because it was a shared space we could see the value in the perception of thoughts and beliefs of others in the group. It was a space where we could feel safe from ridicule and criticism. We would share war stories from the frontlines of teaching and by discussing and commenting on each other's journeys as teachers we were becoming reflective writers and practitioners without even knowing it! It was a gateway to support and encouragement that many of us went through often and at all times of the day and night.

Not only was it there for support, it added an essence of light relief to some of us after a hard day's teaching. On many different occasions it was used as a place for laughter, using the smiley faces to depict our mood of the day and display compassion for other people's situations. Blogging was not inflicted on the group, and the opportunity was there for us to act purely as a "lurker/listener", to read and appreciate other people's reflections without ever taking part in a conversation. At times it helped to adopt a "lurker" position, just to be reassured that you weren't the only person experiencing a "low" time.

The flexibility of the e-portfolio meant that we had the luxury of time for our reflections. Activities, such as creating metaphors of teaching, discussing poetry, images and music to prompt reflection, that are usually confined to the restraints of a traditional

classroom could be uploaded to pebblePAD. There was no pressure to answer/talk back immediately; you had time to think and then respond and everyone had the opportunity to comment, something that can rarely happen in a classroom environment. From the point of view of a dyslexic student in the group it gave them the chance to express the way they thought and felt, without the feeling of being left behind because of their lack of understanding. This was particularly important when engaging with complex theoretical ideas as the e-portfolio offered each of us a different way in.

The ongoing dialogue in the e-portfolio was key in developing our reflective skills. The community we created within the e-portfolio could not have been achieved in the two and a half hours when we meet physically as a group. Sharing the reflections of others has enabled us to look at ourselves differently. Without the e-portfolio and the dialogue with peers and tutor the journey to becoming reflective writers would have been much harder and definitely much lonelier.

As one student identified, we have all made this journey together and we would not have made it so easily without each other and the adventures we have shared using PebblePAD. We have all followed the same path together, sometimes at our own pace and other times hand in hand.

Getting the Ubuntu Going!

Jenny Hughes, University College of Worcester. Jenny has for many years combined her interests in music education with an enthusiasm for live performance. She has taught in Primary, Secondary and Higher Education, and recently gave a lecture and recital on Romantic piano music at the Elgar School of Music in Worcester. Jenny was appointed to her post as Principal Lecturer at Worcester in 1988, having previously lectured at St Martin's College, Lancaster.



In 1998, after attending the ISME (International Society for Music Education) conference in Pretoria, South Africa, I stayed on for an extra week, having been invited to give music workshops to both student and serving teachers around the country. As a result, not only did I have an opportunity to observe the new South Africa at first hand, I also came home with a small collection of songs. These were taught to me by teachers from a range of different communities including former African townships and informal communities (formerly known as shanty towns) as well as universities and colleges of education. I have continued to



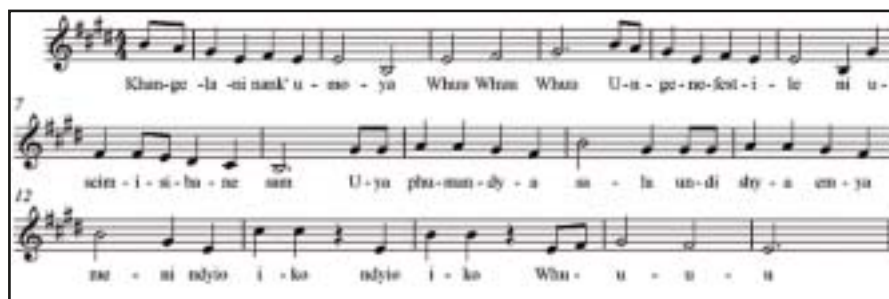
Teachers dancing

less confident gain in confidence and the skilled take up opportunities to improvise and embellish.

After this experience I thought I would never be so lucky as to

find out more about recent developments in music education. A colleague suggested that I approach ESCalate, and the pages I have created with their web designer for the ESCalate website is the result (see details below of the pages which include songs and video footage from classrooms in South Africa).

I was so fortunate to see what huge developments have taken place since my last visit. In 1998, many township schools still had broken windows and little intact furniture. In 2005 I saw well-maintained schools in poorer areas with plenty of



Sung by the teachers of Comisa Primary School, with additional advice from teachers at Naluxulo Primary School, Khayelitsha, nr Cape Town, South Africa

teach some of these to my students and to try and convey an understanding of the term 'Ubuntu' as applied to music. This ancient African concept roughly translated means 'wholeness' or 'humaneness', and when translated into music my understanding is that it implies that everyone is welcome to join in at whatever level they wish. There is talk of 'getting the Ubuntu going', which means a sense of community and togetherness fuelled by the music. It explained for me why so much African music is cyclic in form; as the music is repeated so the

have the chance to go again, but to my surprise last year I was offered a place on a study visit to South Africa by an excellent organisation called TIDE (Teachers in Development Education). In return I was expected to write a chapter in a book on what we as British teacher educators might learn from current educational practice in South Africa. My university generously found funds to pay for this part of my visit but I dearly wanted to stay on for another week to undertake further visits of a musical nature, to give workshops as before, and to



Children making music

resources, even, in some instances, including computer suites which were used by both adults and children in the area.

The study visit was based in Durban and included talks from a wide range of experts in the field of education. We visited schools in very different environments including rural townships and a well-funded urban girl's high school with an excellent academic reputation. We learned about the impact of AIDS on the education system and heard about efforts to

promote sustainable development, particularly in areas with both water shortages and experiencing extreme poverty. We were particularly impressed with one school which proudly indicated their newly built compost toilets, and during a heavy shower of rain we witnessed at first hand how water was collected in huge butts as a result of specially designed roofs with extra wide gutters! What have I passed on to my students? The fact that citizenship education in South Africa is streets ahead of ours;

every subject is taught from the standpoint of encouraging all to feel that they have a voice and must use it to promote democracy. No doubt this approach stems from the tragic past of the country, but it is nevertheless impressive and I feel that we could do so much more in Britain of a similar nature. The South African Curriculum 2005 is a fascinating document; studying the details has been a revelation. For example, it is recommended that one activity in music might be to encourage the pupils to think of a human

rights issue about which they feel strongly and to write a protest song about it.

TIDE: www.tidec.org

SA curriculum details: www.curriculum.wcape.school.za/

Exploring Ubuntu through music education website www.escalate.ac.uk/1760

Academic Consultant - Janet Strivens

Personal Development Planning: Are We Achieving Our Goal?

By Janet Strivens, from University of Liverpool is Senior Associate Director, Centre for Recording Achievement. Janet's interests all cluster around supporting the learner and the learning process. I am also leading the implementation of personal development planning within the University, which reflects a range of interests from e-portfolios to the self-managed learner.



As most people know, the origin of the current policy on Personal Development Planning (PDP) was Recommendation 20 of the Dearing Report (NCIHE 1997) which suggested that Progress Files (a term that had recently been introduced in the school sector to replace the National Record of Achievement) should be developed in Higher Education, consisting of two elements:

- ◆ A Transcript recording student achievement;
- ◆ And a means by which students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development.

The QAA instigated a national consultation into this second element, drawing largely on networks already established by the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA)¹. CRA is an educational charity originally established – as a project – in 1991 whose purpose is ‘to promote awareness and understanding of recording achievement processes as an important element in improving learning and progression throughout the world of education, training and employment’. It was thus a natural partner in the consultation process.

What emerged from the consultation was, firstly, a term to describe Dearing's second

element which has become widely accepted – personal development planning. Secondly, the QAA published a set of guidelines² for both aspects of Recommendation 20 which incorporated a definition of PDP which has become equally widely accepted: “a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual:

- ◆ To reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and
- ◆ To plan for their personal, educational and career development”.

In the guidance QAA set out a set of minimum expectations for

institutional PDP policies but, crucially, the nature and scope of opportunities for PDP and the recording and support strategies were left to be determined by each institution. Target dates for implementation were set: institutions should aim to have Transcripts available for students for the academic session 2002–3 and to have provided PDP opportunities for all students by 2005–6.

Two main approaches to implementation have been observed³. Many institutions have chosen to embed the PDP process into the curriculum through designated credit-bearing modules. This route has the distinct advantages of ensuring good rates of participation and having resources of staff time attached. Other institutions see PDP as an overarching entitlement best delivered through a tutorial or mentoring system. This facilitates a holistic view of development, including extracurricular experiences, but presents difficulties both in staff resourcing and student engagement.

During 2005 the CRA carried out a consultation⁴ across the sector to assess progress towards implementation. This consultation confirmed that staff saw the PDP initiative as being essentially about supporting the development of the self-identity of the learner. The model of PDP which received widespread support from practitioners was as a process of:

- ◆ Thinking ahead and planning, using both critical rational thinking and imagination;
- ◆ Doing something and being more aware of what is being done;
- ◆ Recording these observations and perceptions;

- ◆ Reviewing/reflecting on actions and their effects;
- ◆ Evaluating and making judgements about self and the effects of own actions;
- ◆ Engaging in conversation with a teacher/tutor and/or peers in order to discuss/challenge experiences, perceptions and judgements;
- ◆ Using this personal knowledge as a resource to inform future actions.

Staff came up with four priorities for further development. A key concern was the development of a sound **evidence base**. They also wanted more high quality **resources**, more **training** in the skills necessary to support the process and more **involvement from senior management**. It also became clear that institutions were increasingly looking for technological support for all aspects of the PDP process.

Since September 2005 the CRA as an Associate Centre of the Higher Education Academy has been tasked with addressing these priorities. It takes the lead for the HEA on all matters concerning PDP and e-Portfolios in Higher Education. During Summer 2006 it will run a series of Evaluation and Research seminars⁵; a national survey of e-PDP/e-Portfolio practices is being launched; a consultancy service is on offer; and an international research event is planned for October 2006. September 2005, the implementation target date that once seemed so distant, has come and gone but the work continues!

Reference:

¹The Centre for Recording Achievement:
www.recordingachievement.org

² QAA [2001] *Guidelines on HE Progress Files* at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructures/progressfiles/guidelines/default.asp

³ Brennan and Shah (2003) *Report on the Implementation of Progress Files* (CHERI Review) at:
www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/progressfiles/

⁴ Ward, Strivens and Jackson (2005) *Progress files: are we achieving our goal?* at:
www.recordingachievement.org/downloads/PFWorkingPaper.pdf

⁵ Further coming events from The Centre for Recording Achievement at:
www.recordingachievement.org/news_and_events/xevents_all.asp

In Conversation with...

Stamatina Gkika, International Student

Stamatina Gkika, a Greek student studying a MEd 'Psychology in Education' in a British University. Stamatina was talking to Dr Julie Anderson and Jane Tuffill in the ESCalate Bristol office.

Why did you choose to study in Britain?

It is the usual thing in Greece for students to go to Britain to continue further studies. Especially as in Greece, they learn English from an early age, so the language isn't such an issue.

Some of the British Universities are very highly regarded; not all but some. It can help when trying to find work back in Greece to have a well thought of degree from Britain.

Also the recruitment process is different from other countries. In Britain you fill in a form, and then the Universities say yes or no to you. Not to say this is easier, but it is different from some other countries where they might want you to do a test.

What are the main differences you have found studying in Britain compared to Greece?

Mainly the organisation, it is very structured in Britain and the courses in Greece are not organised in the same way, and some people struggle with things like time keeping, like me!

Also in Greece they do less essays, and presentations, and more exams at the end of term. They are more focused on the theory and not practical skills. In my first degree (Philosophy, Education and Psychology)

they did more modules than in Britain. I did about 50 modules over the four years of the course.

How have you found studying in Britain, and studying in a foreign language? How easy has it been to integrate into the education community?

I have enjoyed it, the school has been very keen to help; this may just be the department I'm in, as in Education/ Psychology, the staff is really helpful.

I like Britain, it has more people from different countries here, and I like to meet people from other countries, as it is not like this in Greece. It is more cosmopolitan in Britain.

Language was okay, as I said we learn English from an early age, and I like talking to English people, as I want their feedback on mistakes I make in phrasing and grammar.

Some people may struggle, as there are some cultural differences. The main one is, as I said before, the organisation and the structure of the studies. In addition there are people here from all over the world that one should know how to behave in order not to be misunderstood.

What advice would you offer to others coming to Britain to study?

For advice, I would say you need to have a positive outlook and be strong as they will be nervous about the language and living in Britain, and there are going to be hard times. Some people come here, and just want to get the qualification and return to Greece and just keep saying, "I want to go home". But I have enjoyed it!

You recently submitted an essay into our Student Award 2006. How did you find writing the essay?

I enjoy writing, so I wanted to do it, and I think it was easier for a non English person to do it, as I could compare and contrast the two systems: that in Greece and that in Britain.

So what are your plans for the future?

Not sure, if I do further study it will be practical this time, but I want to work now: maybe in Britain or another European country, before I go back to Greece for the rest of my life! My parents, they will not be happy if I don't go home one day!

Thank you Stamatina for your time and interesting insights

ESCalate Supported and Sponsored Events

Higher Education Academy Conference 2006.

Enhancing the Student Learning Experience.

East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham 3rd - 5th July 2006

This is the second Annual Conference of the Higher Education Academy and focuses on all aspects relating to enhancing the student learning experience.

The 2006 Conference will focus on three major themes:

- ◆ Higher education policy
- ◆ Scholarship of teaching and learning in the disciplines
- ◆ Innovations to support the student learning experience.

The 24 winners of the HEA Student Award (subject specific), and the overall winner will be announced, and presented with their prizes before the 2nd day Dinner.

Visit the HEA website for more information www.heacademy.ac.uk

Forum for Access and Continuing Education (FACE) Annual Conference.

Transformation, Progression and Hope: whatever happened to life long learning?

Swansea University. 3rd - 5th July 2006.

Professor John Field (Associate Director of ESCalate) is a Keynote speaker.

Visit the FACE website for more informaton www.f-a-c-e.org.uk

British Association for International and Comparative Education Conference (BAICE).

Diversity and Inclusion: Issues in Comparative and International Education.

Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland 8th - 10th September 2006.

Keyspeakers:

- ◆ Professor Keith Lewin, University of Sussex. Diversity in Convergence – Access to Education for All
- ◆ Professor Tony Gallagher of the Queen's University Belfast

ESCalate is sponsoring a reception, and would like to meet you there. A short talk will be given on the Saturday night about the role of ESCalate. If you would like to know more about ESCalate or how we can support you please contact us on heacademy-escalate@bristol.ac.uk.

Visit the BAICE website for more information www.qub.ac.uk/edu/baice/

British Educational Research Association (BERA) Annual Conference September

University of Warwick 6th - 9th September.

Dr Julie Anderson will be attending this event on behalf of ESCalate and presenting a paper, but will be very happy to meet and discuss how ESCalate can support your work.

Visit the BERA website for more information <http://beraconference.clarocada.com/index.php>