Abstract

The following paper is designed to assist institutions in considering the staff development systems needed to achieve the vision and goals of open and flexible learning. It argues that moving into open and flexible learning represents a major paradigm shift for institutions and staff. New teaching and learning strategies need to be adopted, new methods and technologies mastered, and new roles and working practices accepted, all of which require institutions to become ‘learning organisations’, transform themselves through knowledge management and adopt a ‘conversational framework’ for change.

The paper discusses the need for induction for all newly appointed staff and staff new to open and flexible learning, continuing professional development and leadership training and future orientation programmes to help managers and staff envision and plan for change. It stresses the need for enduring learning experiences that will change attitudes as well as develop knowledge and skills. It also suggests that the multi-modal, multi-media approaches that are now advocated for the students’ learning be similarly employed in professional development.

The paper is based upon Latchem & Lockwood (1998), the author’s work in Australia, SE Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean, and research in this field.

Introduction

All around the globe, institutions are adopting open and flexible learning in response to changing political and socio-economic circumstances, new educational thinking, globalisation, international competition and the advances in information and communications technology (ICT). This mainstreaming of open and flexible learning represents a major paradigm shift. Off-campus courses/programmes need to be extended, enhanced and multi-modal, combining Internet/Web, face-to-face and other mediated interaction and self-study. And on-campus programmes need to adopt the materials, methods and technologies of distance learning and involve active learning and problem-solving by students rather than passive learning and lecturing. All of which transformations need to be accomplished economically and in accordance with the educational needs and cultural diversity of the learners.

The following paper argues that for such transformation to be fully realised:

- Institutions need to become ‘learning organisations’.
- New forms of teaching need to be ‘championed’ by the senior managers.
- Open and flexible learning needs to be recognised as everyone’s concern.
- Centres or support groups are needed to lead, promote, nurture and research these changes in collaboration with schools/departments.
- Schools/departments need to review and re-engineer their plans, budgets and operations to be proactive, entrepreneurial and innovative.
- Teachers need to change from being ‘instructors’ to ‘resource specialists’ and ‘response specialists’.
- Students need to be less teacher-dependent and engage in self, peer and tutor guided and resource-based learning.
- New technologies and technology-based work practices need to be adopted and mastered.

Quality also needs to be ensured in the provision of open and flexible learning. Institutions and programmes will be judged by such performance indicators as:

- Entry and delivery systems that ensure access and equity.
- Courses/programmes that are intellectually challenging and culturally inclusive.
- Courses/programmes that are of equally high quality whether on-campus or off-campus.
- Courses/programmes that are flexibly delivered and suited to the professional, community, cultural and individual needs of the learners.
- Technology that is well used for discourse, interaction, inquiry and collaboration.
- Students who are motivated to learn, perform well and have a desire for lifelong learning.
- Internal collaboration and external alliances that improve the range, scope, quality, relevance and cost-effectiveness of the courses/programmes.
The need for professional development

The vast majority of university teachers are highly committed to their work, but as Dean, Fraser & Ryan (2003) observe of Australian lecturers, academic staff are rarely trained or qualified to do what they mostly do—teach. Ironically, the very professionals who accredit graduates to engage in professional practice have no formal training or accreditation for their own work in this area. Furthermore, as Paul (1990) observes, the majority of staff who become involved with open learning and responsible for its governance are typically more familiar with conventional face-to-face methods of teaching than the theory and practice of such alternative forms of learning. Researching the work roles of over 2,600 academics in 15 Australian universities, McInnis (2000) found that 66 percent of these teachers were engaged in developing ICT courseware, 72 percent were involved with computer-based learning, and 46 percent were working in distance education contexts. Few had received any training for this work and yet two-thirds of these staff reported that this work accounted for half their working week and was having a major impact on their other duties. These are the very staff who are expected to bring about change.

Staff can experience many problems when institutions move into open and flexible learning and import new ideas and practices that are neither fully understood by, or in accord with, the managers’ and staffs’ traditional values and practices. This can easily occur whenever politicians, planners and senior managers become carried away with success stories of open and learning and fail to appreciate the professionalism, commitment, energy, time and resources demanded by such work. But all staff will at some time and in some aspect of this work be at the ‘novice’ stage. They will lack experience and not understand which are the relevant facts, features, procedures and so on. At this stage, they can only play a marginal role in the change process. When they become ‘expert’, the new knowledge and skills become internalised, they do things well and intuitively, they have a sense of ownership and purpose, they perceive things holistically and can zero in on key problems quickly and accurately, and they are interested in pursuing and applying new learning.

To address these issues, staff development needs to be conceived as an integrated, systemic and ongoing process through which schools/departments, course teams, work groups and individuals are helped to move from the ‘novice’ to the ‘expert’ stage. It not only needs to build knowledge and skills but change mindsets, for this is what brings about enduring change. It needs to be embedded in the institutional policies, procedures and priorities and it needs to be linked to:

- Leadership development.
- Strategic planning.
- Scholarship, reflective practice and action research.
- Reward and recognition.

Resistance to change

Resistance to change must be anticipated and planned for. Rogers (1996) suggests that in any organisational change, about 15 percent of the staff will be ‘early adopters’ and with support and encouragement, another 45 percent will become ‘late adopters’. The remainder of the staff are likely to be more resistant to change, for reasons of fear, limited knowledge and information, resistance to any new ideas ‘from above’, low energy, low trust, limited time, limited resources and/or a lack of recognition and reward.

Different strategies are needed for what Scott and Jaffe (1990) define as the four stages of transition: denial; resistance; exploration; and commitment.

The first of these stages, denial, involves rejection of the external imperatives and need for change. The orientation is to the traditionally accepted values and practices. This requires a raising of staff awareness of the need for change and a demonstration of the benefits to be gained.

At the resistance stage, the over-riding concern of staff is ‘protection of self’. Here the training has to not only to be concerned with knowledge and skills building but inspiring the staff, acknowledging their doubts and concerns, and promoting the positive values of the change.

At the exploration stage, the staff need to be helped to recognise that things do not always work out right or meet with instant success and that professional and peer support is available to help them in risk-taking experiential learning.

In the final stage, commitment, the staff orientation is now to the future, not the past. They are empowered and capable of supporting change and envisioning and implementing further change.

Bennis, Benne and Chin (1961) suggest that change is achieved through a careful mix of:

- Power-coercive strategies — using political and economic sanctions to achieve intended outcomes.
- Empirical-rational strategies — appealing to, informing and equipping staff through reasoning, information and research.
- Normative-re-educative strategies — using change agents and peer influence to re-orientate staff attitudes, values, perceptions and behaviours and encourage them to support the goals and targets.

From these observations, it follows that staff development needs an integrated strategy of:

- Leadership training (for senior managers, heads of schools/departments and those who lead courses and programmes).
- Managerial support.
- Staff training (in skills), instruction (in principles, methods, etc.), induction (into ways of thinking and initiation (into ways of working).
- Individual and group problem- and case-based learning and action research.
- Mentoring and peer support.
The ultimate goal must be internal rather than external motivation, both at the group and individual level. Some degree of external motivation may be needed, but behavioural and attitudinal change that comes from within is more likely to be long lasting.

Systematic and integrated staff development

The paradigm shift into open and flexible learning requires staff development provision to address system-wide complexities and points of inertia.

At the Indira Gandhi National Open University in India, Koul and Murugan (1989) found that there were three main groups needing staff development:

- Policy-makers, planners and administrators needing to be acquainted with the philosophy and intricacies of integrating the academic, organisational and administrative aspects of open and distance learning.
- Academic staff needing to be helped in developing and delivering courses and programmes and providing personal contact for off-campus students.
- Non-academic and technical staff needing guidance in dovetailing their expertise with the particular requirements of open and distance learning.

They also found that this staff development needed to be provided at three levels:

- Short-term orientation designed to meet the immediate needs of teaching staff, policy-makers and planners.
- Medium-term training programmes ranging from basic principles and operations to advanced levels and special themes.
- Long-term human resource development based upon perceptions of future needs.

Abdullah (1998) found that there were three broad categories of staff need when introducing distance education into Institut Teknologi MARA in Malaysia, each requiring a different strategy:

- Teachers having difficulty with the philosophy of open and distance education. Here workshops were found to be useful for familiarising staff with the new concepts and requirements.
- Teachers concerned about their lack of skills in course and materials development. Here attachments to course teams was found to be the most appropriate way of helping these staff develop the necessary knowledge and skills and appreciate the advantages of teamwork.
- Teachers finding difficulty with the off-campus adult learners. Here student survey findings were used to help staff recognise the positive aspects of the learners, the pressures they were under, and how they might be helped.

The above observations show that staff development needs to:

- Be regarded by everyone as a critically important investment of time, effort and resources.
- Be participatory and link theory, research and practice.
- Be proactive and innovative.
- Empower and extend individual and institutional horizons.
- Include follow-up and support.

It needs to help:

- Managers and administrators in their policymaking, planning and actions.
- Teachers in their new roles as team leaders, curriculum developers, course writers, users of technology, tutors, assessors, evaluators and researchers.
- Editors, instructional designers, media, ICT and others in their professional support roles.
- Those who provide administrative and clerical support for open and flexible learning.

Just as a multi-modal approach is advocated for student learning, so it should be in professional development, involving:

- Staff development workshops and seminars provided centrally.
- Staff development, mentoring and support provided within schools/departments.
- Self-study and online instruction.
- Showcasing best practice in open and flexible courses and courseware.
- Reflective practice sessions.
- Collaborative learning.
- Face-to-face and virtual communities of practice.
• Action research.
• Sabbaticals, secondments, exchanges and shadowing.
• Presentations by visiting experts.
• Postgraduate and other formal study.
• Conference participation.
• Institutional teaching and learning forums.

Robinson (1998) suggests that the staff development process needs:

• Pre-training preparation — clarifying and communicating the objectives and intended outcomes; selecting and serving staff equitably and in accordance with clear criteria; building positive expectations and motivation in staff; and planning for the resources/changes needed to implement the new ideas or practices.

• Management of the process — ensuring that there is time release and reduction of workloads so that teaching staff can focus on change, rethink their ways of working and develop and trial new courses and materials; providing context-specific training; providing the necessary resources/facilities; arranging for and supporting transfer of new learning back into the workplace.

• Post-training support — ensuring a breathing space for re-entry in the workplace; providing opportunities, time and resources for new ideas to be put into practice; providing mentoring and feedback; providing recognition and reward where due.

• Linkages with the other strands of the institutional vision and strategic directions such as promotion and recognition of staff; research; quality assurance and strengthening of operations.

It is important to involve the schools/departments in determining the staff development needs and strategies.

Advisory committees may be helpful in ensuring that professional development is seen as an activity that is undertaken with staff and not something ‘done to them’. Such consultation processes can also be useful in identifying and overcoming any problems of time and workloads — the reasons most commonly cited by staff for not participating in staff development.

In distance teaching and multi-campus institutions, staff development must also be provided for those who are not working on the main campus. Paul (op. cit.) stresses the importance of joint training sessions for all on-campus and off-campus staff to ensure that those in the outlying areas understand the institutional rules and procedures and can carry these out while those on the main campus are sensitised to the concerns and circumstances of their off-campus colleagues.

Staff development must be budgeted for. The costs of achieving such ambitious visions can be high – for example, the UK’s Open University spends about two million dollars a year on training its 7,000 nation-wide associate lecturers to ensure that they are capable of providing the necessary dedicated and professional support for the OU’s students (Daniel, 1999). But such expenditure must be weighed against the advantages of having a workforce with the commitment and capacity for change based upon accumulated knowledge and experience.

**Causes of failure in staff development**

Robinson (1998) suggests that the causes of failure in staff development are:

• Opposition or apathy in senior staff.
• Simply serving those few individuals who volunteer.
• Ignoring and avoiding hard-core resistance.
• Inadequate resourcing.
• Inappropriate content, strategies, timetabling and duration.

• Training being too theoretical, didactic or remote from the realities of the workplace or the organisational culture.
• Time-lag between training and implementation.
• Lack of follow-up.

These factors too need to be taken into account in planning professional development programmes.

**Scholarly practice in open and flexible learning**

Without research and evaluation to inform it, open and flexible learning will lack quality and relevance. And yet, as Anderson (2002) and Bates (2001) show, research findings, theories, tools and techniques generated by academic-based researchers on behalf of others rarely trickle down through the normal channels of academic publication and dissemination. Noting the inadequacy of the dissemination of the knowledge gained about telelearning in Canada’s largest individual research funding programme, the Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Program, Anderson (op. cit.) concluded that such a disconnect results from funding and evaluating research in a context that is so fundamentally different from its eventual application and where transference is highly unlikely. He suggests that education systems and institutions should be looked upon as a huge research laboratory ripe for generating both basic and applied knowledge and that the practitioners themselves should be engaged in identifying real problems, discovering new knowledge and finding appropriate solutions.

It is useful here to consider open and flexible learning and staff development as ‘scholarly practice’ (Boyer, 1990). Boyer’s re-definition of ‘scholarship’ has had a profound effect in many universities. In place of the tired old ‘teaching versus research debate’, Boyer recommends that universities need to conceive themselves as engaging in four equally creative and intellectually demanding forms of scholarship which he describes as the scholarship of discovery; the scholarship of integration; the
scholarship of application; and the scholarship of teaching.

The scholarship of discovery is akin to ‘pure research’. It is concerned with asking fundamental questions and contributing to the stock of knowledge and intellectual climate of the university. In the open and flexible learning context, it could take the form of fundamental research into e.g., the theory and philosophy of learning, cognition and metacognition systems or new technological development.

The scholarship of integration focuses on the meanings of these discoveries. The research and development is carried out where disciplinary boundaries meet, where things need to be put into context, where isolated findings need to be given meaning and where new connections need to be made. In the open and flexible learning context, it is the kind of work that helps to, e.g., improve understanding of student learning, the learning contexts and how to design and deliver improved learning systems or explores areas at the crossover between the psychology of learning and technology used for learning.

The scholarship of application is concerned with applying this new knowledge to real-life problems. Here, theory and practice interact, inform and renew each other and new understandings arise in the very act of implementation. In the case of open and flexible learning, this work could take the form of, e.g., exploring how to bridge the research-practice divide, improving professional development services, or ensuring that courses/programmes serve individual learners’ needs and reflect cultural differences in the learners.

The scholarship of teaching embodies the idea that teaching should be far more than a routine activity and that teachers should continually be exploring ways of improving performance and outcomes and making connections with the other forms of scholarship.

The idea of the scholarship should be integral to institutional transformation into open and flexible learning and:

- Solving complex problems in managing, developing and delivering courses/programmes.
- Assessing, revising and improving polices and procedures.
- Developing effective, efficient and robust educational products and services.
- Adapting general findings and recommendations to specific local conditions.

The learning organisation

For the kinds of transformation discussed above, the institution itself must become a ‘learning organisation’, utilising a knowledge management system, running multiple strands of enquiry and development at the same time and sharing and acting upon contextualised experience.

Laurillard (2002) suggests that just as learning by individuals and groups needs dialogue, or what she calls a ‘conversational framework’, so learning organisations need such a framework for their thinking and decision-making. Lines of communication need to be open and inclusive, ideas and concerns need to be shared through top-down and bottom-up processes, and mutual understandings and obligations need to be negotiated. Professional development occurs through all of these processes.

In any change process, the role, stance and energies of the institutional leaders and managers are critical. Bottom-up change is always something to be encouraged but is rarely sustainable without support from above. Leaders and managers need to ‘walk the talk’ as well as ‘talk the talk’. They also need to ensure that the requisite resources are provided, the most important of which is time - staff must be granted time release if they are to change in their attitudes and work practices.

The system as a whole must be well informed about the reasons for and nature and ramifications of the changes. The students, the staff and the wider community need to be enabled to share the same understandings of, and commitment to, the value, nature and expectations of open and flexible learning. This too requires a conversational framework.

Centralizing and/or devolving staff development

One of the strategic decisions that universities need to take is about the type of support system that might best drive and gain support for the professional development agenda. Staff development can be centralised and/or devolved.

The case for centralising staff development can be argued in terms of the value of a one stop shop of educational and technical expertise, services and resources in a high profile centre that symbolises the institution’s commitment to change. One such centre is the University of South Australia’s Flexible Learning Centre (FLC) which was established as part of the university’s strategic plan to adopt a whole-of-institution approach to student-centred flexible learning. The FLC is charged with providing policy advice to the university and its departments on teaching and learning, staff development, student support, technology change and helping the teaching divisions create courses/programmes and convert these to online. Its creation was deliberately managerial and interventionist (Bradley, 2001). Another example is the Indira Gandhi National Open University’s Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE) which not only serves the university but distance education institutions throughout India and South Asia and offers postgraduate diploma and masters programmes in distance education (Koul, 1998). Yetton and Associates (1997), Latchem & Moran (1998) and Bradley (op cit.) have examined in some detail the educational, structural resource advantages of thus merging academic staff development, open and distance learning support, and technology support systems into one.

The case for devolving staff development rests upon the need for professional development to be responsive to, and embedded in, the specific disciplines, cultures and operations in the schools/departments of the university, the fact that the technology used to develop and deliver the courses, programmes and services has now largely migrated from the previously specialised support centres to the lecturer’s desk and in multi-site institutions, the need to ensure equal
levels of service and support for those staff who are away from the main campus.

In practice, it is usually found that staff development needs to be both centralised and devolved or networked. The centre is needed to act as a ‘magnet’, drawing staff into the change process, co-ordinating activities and providing the overview for managers and staff. At the same time, there is need for a ‘Johnny Appleseed’ model of diffusion and change in schools/departments. Staff from the centre need to go out to broadcast new ideas, help to recognise and seize upon new opportunities, train and assist staff, and communicate the ‘bigger picture’ of what is to be achieved.

To further devolve the staff development process, staff development associates can be appointed within schools/departments. Such a strategy reflects the extent of the change needed, the range of disciplines and academic cultures involved, and the greater readiness of lecturers to take advice from their peers and receive training, mentoring and support within their actual work settings.

Whatever model is finally adopted, an organisational structure is needed that will provide the necessary integration of staff development, research and academic/technological support for open and flexible learning. The knowledge and skills of the staff developers, instructional design and media/ICT staff must be harnessed to this task. They need to operate in accordance with the old dictum: ‘Give a family some fish and they will eat for a week. Give them a rod and line and they will eat for a lifetime’. In other words, they should empower, inform and skill staff so that they only require occasional higher level instructional design or technological support from the centre. Otherwise, the task will be endless and the universal implementation of open and flexible learning will be an impossible dream.

Ultimately, one person must provide the leadership and be accountable for the centre and its staff development programme. This person needs to be fully conversant with open and flexible learning and organisational change. S/he must also have academic credibility and a senior management status within the organisation if s/he is to successfully bridge the gap between the vision and goals of the institution and the realities of the schools/departments. S/he also needs leadership and entrepreneurial skills.

**A Virtual Learning Environment for staff development**

Staff may be widely distributed, staff turnover may be high, workloads may be heavy, and staff may be expected to do more with less time and fewer resources. An increasing number of tertiary teaching staff are on limited-term contracts or employed on a part-time basis. Some are recruited locally to work in off-campus centres rather than on the main campuses. These casual staff may not be conversant with the aims and applications of open and flexible learning or familiar with the learners’ needs and circumstances. They are not normally paid or enabled to take part in the induction and other staff development programmes available to the full-time, on-campus staff and they have little or no opportunities to experience the culture of the workplace.

It therefore follows that staff development needs to be ongoing and available for all staff at all times, not simply the minority who are willing and able to participate in on-campus events. Staff need to be able access staff development resources, support and advice quickly, easily, whenever they need it. One way of addressing this problem, an approach adopted for OU staff by the university’s Institute of Educational Technology and Centre for Higher Education Practice and which is in line with moves to accredit the Open University, is the provision of staff development through self-study (some online) supported by tutoring and mentoring (CeHEP, 1999).

Such an approach ensures that staff development:

- Is available to all staff, in all regions, at all locations and at all times.
- Fits in with staff’s work timetables.
- Is to uniform standard.
- Can provide ‘just in time, just for me and just for now’ training.
- Is easily updated.
- Is interactive and collaborative.
- Models the modes of learning to be developed by the staff and experienced by their students.

A virtual learning environment (VLE) can be created, using the Internet/Web and the multimedia capacities of CDs and DVDs (see Figure 1. overleaf). Such a system can give a high profile to the institution’s commitment to access, equity and new forms of delivery and familiarise staff with the new technologies and their benefits. Staff anywhere and at any time can access information, advice and training in the form of easily-digested modules or ‘learning objects’, frequently asked questions (FAQs) and a help desk. They can also use the Internet to interact and collaborate with their peers, staff developers, and with other institutions and internationally.

The VLE approach exemplifies the idea of a conversational framework for change. It enables staff to take greater responsibility for their own personal/professional development and reduces demands on the centre. It can also offer formal study opportunities to a greater number of staff more equitably and flexibly.

There are many excellent, freely accessible training resources on the Web, for example, through the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) Website (<www.col.org>). So the first step in establishing any VLE is to identify and provide links to these existing materials and services and then move on to adding the institution-specific information and training resources, exemplary materials, etc. (see Figure 2 overleaf).

**Induction**

The first key element in systemic staff development is induction for all managers, lecturers, administrators and support staff new to the institution and open and flexible learning. One or two day events at the start of each semester or term will provide a conversational framework for understanding the changes and role
changes involved in realising the vision and goals of open and flexible learning. At such events, senior managers can explain the institutional vision and strategic plan and the centrality of open and flexible delivery in the policies and procedures, describe the nature and implications of the new educational paradigm, outline the available support services, and discuss these issues with the newcomers.

Teaching, library, administrative and technical support staff who will be directly and immediately involved in open and flexible learning can also visit the support services and look at and discuss some exemplary courses and materials. They can also be invited to attend voluntary reflective practice sessions at the centre over the following weeks in which they can share their discoveries, concerns and viewpoints.

Staff at other campuses and centres can be exposed to this induction process synchronously through audio- or video-conferencing or video broadcast or asynchronously through the VLE. At this stage it is crucial to avoid any feeling of ‘us and them’ or ‘haves and have-nots’. Reflective practice sessions should also be provided at the other sites. Where staff are unable to attend these events, because they are teaching, working at another campus or centre, casual or part-time, or joining the university mid-term, the induction presentations and handouts can be made available on the Internet/Web and/or in the form of videos/DVDs.

There is also need for shorter induction programmes for newly-appointed staff in their respective schools/departments/centres.

**Basic and continuing staff development**

As noted earlier, most staff will be most familiar and most comfortable with the kinds of teaching they themselves have experienced, that is to say, classroom-based, teacher-centred and with the traditional kinds of student. To achieve the paradigm shift to open and flexible learning, staff development will need to help schools, working groups and individuals change their mindsets and move out from their ‘comfort zones’ and engage with such issues as:

- The institutional vision and goals for open and flexible learning and the benefits.
- The new paradigms of open, flexible, online and lifelong learning, student/client focus, strategic partnering and global networking, and institutional transformation.
- How theory and research can inform open and flexible learning.
- Curriculum/course development.
- Instructional design.
- Objectives-based learning.
- Constructivist learning.
- Creating, adopting or adapting learning materials in all media.
- Knowledge management systems.
- Digital multimedia course components or ‘learning objects’ and meta-databases.
- Cultural diversity, gender and communication and learning.
- Designing and managing learning environments.

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<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Components</th>
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<tr>
<td>Announcements</td>
<td>Homepage. Training programs/resources index. Noticeboard. Newsletter.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information and training materials</td>
<td>Links to Commonwealth of Learning and other training resources/learning objects. Institution-specific information and training resources. AudioPowerPoint presentations, lecture transcripts and audio/video recordings of presentations by visiting experts and staff. Examples of courses and courseware. FAQs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work tools</td>
<td>Calendar. Preset forms for submitting course proposals, costing course development and delivery, selecting media, guiding desktop publishing, etc. File upload area.</td>
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*Figure 1: Components of a staff development VLE*
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<th>Source</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Inline DFI Journals</strong></td>
<td>TechKnowLogia &lt;www.techknowlogia.org&gt; International Research Review of Distance Learning <a href="http://www.irrodl.org">www.irrodl.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutionally-developed Training materials</strong></td>
<td>Institutional vision, strategic directions and priorities for open and flexible learning. The students, their learning styles and tutorial and support needs. The instructional design, desktop publishing, media and ICT facilities and services. Library and information services for open and flexible learning. Administrative support for open and flexible learning. Guidelines on new/revised courses, course development/delivery, workloads, assignments, assessment turnaround times, feedback on assignments, etc. Costing development and delivery. Purchasing and adopting courses/materials from other institutions. Teaching practical courses through open and flexible learning. Development schedules and tracking. Copyright, intellectual property, plagiarism etc.</td>
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**Figure 2:** Training resources that could be made available through the VLE.
Universities are faced with increasing assumptions and ways of doing things that fundamentally challenge basic calls for leaders of vision who can (2001) institutional transformation. As shown by Latchem & Hanna (1996), the prevailing culture can nurture the right leadership behaviour in staff or stultify it. Leadership succession decisions are also critical to the renewal process. For change to be maintained, any new leadership must truly personify it.

Future orientation

Professional development also needs to include future orientation. There need to be opportunities for managers and staff to learn about trends and developments; identify and anticipate external opportunities and threats and internal capabilities and weaknesses; and envision and prepare for change.

Reflective practice

Staff development also needs to be associated with Schön’s (1987) concept of ‘reflective practice’. Schön suggests that the mark of the true professional is that s/he is always learning, experientially, personally, locally and for continuous improvement. The encouragement of reflective practice also takes account of the fact that quality assurance or continuous performance improvement depends largely upon staff capacities for self-evaluation (Van Vught & Westerheijden, 1994).

To be professionals in open and flexible learning, staff need to:

- Reflect upon and develop their own abilities within their particular working contexts.
- Combine research and practice in their everyday operations.
- Continually question commonly-held assumptions and practices and their implications.
- Look for answers to work problems and where these might apply in other contexts.
- Develop hypotheses and conclusions and revise assumptions and practices.
- Share and reflect upon their experience.

Staff should therefore be given every encouragement to reflect upon their work and the consequences. For example, weekly informal reflective practice sessions can be organised at the open and flexible learning or staff development centre and/or in schools/
departments in the form of lunchtime ‘brown bags’ or follow-up events to the induction and other staff development programmes. Here staff can reflect upon and share their concerns, ideas and discoveries with their peers and the staff developers. Where staff cannot meet face-to-face, reflective practice sessions can be conducted synchronously by means of audio-and video-conferencing or asynchronously by online discussion groups or chat rooms.

Reflective practice can also be encouraged by creating ‘communities of practice’ — groups of staff who have common interests and concerns and can gain by sharing their thinking face-to-face or online. Such collaborative learning may be captured digitally and disseminated for reuse by other groups. Some of these communities of practice can be inter-institutional, international and virtual.

Another approach to encouraging reflective practice which has proved very successful and popular in the West Australian context is the organisation of annual ‘Teaching and Learning Forums.’ These events can be organised within a single institution. This is how the Teaching and Learning Forums began but they are now a collaborative undertaking by the five universities in Perth. Responsibility for funding (modest registration fees cover most of the costs) and hosting these two-day events rotates through the institutions. The planning committees are cross-institutional. Such forums make minimal use of plenary sessions. They mainly comprise parallel sessions – presentations, case studies or workshops by the teachers themselves. Their prime aim is to encourage the widest possible range of teachers to reflect and report on their teaching experiences and share their concerns, innovations and findings with their peers. With all the participating institutions in one city, any ideas generated in these forums are easily followed up on. The papers are published in proceedings which provide a unique record of what is being done locally to enhance teaching and an invaluable resource and springboard for further development.

### Action research

To be leading practitioners of open and flexible learning, universities also need to be leading researchers in the field. Action research and other forms of research are needed to fill the gaps in understanding how best to provide courses and programmes in different contexts.

Kember (1998) argues the case for action research as a form of staff development. He bases his argument on his experience of the Action Learning Project which has supported many new developments in Hong Kong universities.

The aim of action research is to empower staff to reflect upon, monitor and take responsibility for improving their own work. The participants seek to improve those aspects of their teaching that are of interest and concern. The projects are undertaken by teams and proceed through cycles of planning, action, observation and reflection. Data are gathered to provide evidence to guide and inform future practice. Those teams that feel confident to conduct their projects on their own are free to do so but if they lack certain expertise, they can call upon ‘consultants’, ‘advisers’ or ‘critical friends’ within or beyond their institution. The Hong Kong Action Learning Projects are regarded as akin to research projects so staff can qualify for the traditional rewards of scholarly activity. Action research findings can be used to try to persuade colleagues that they too could change and the lessons learned can be more widely disseminated through publications, conferences, the Web, etc.

Collaborative action research can be encouraged by a small research grants scheme or ‘mini-fellowships’ wherein staff are granted time release and carry out specially targeted research that is mentored by staff developers or their own colleagues.

### Training the trainers

Whether staff developers are full-time professionals in open and flexible learning or teaching staff helping their colleagues in schools/departments they are called upon to fulfill many roles. For example Andresen (1991) suggests that staff developers need to combine the roles of:

- Teacher (or developer and deliverer of courses and courseware).
- Researcher/scholar (of curriculum development, teaching, student learning, applications of technology).
- Administrator (of policies and practices supporting staff development).
- Organiser (of staff development courses, workshops and programmes).
- Broker (of arrangements, funding and resources for staff development).
- Manager (of projects, programmes, personnel and finances).
- Change agent (stimulator of change and innovation).
- Adviser (to management and to staff).
- Counsellor (helping staff cope with problems).
- Consultant (to projects and staff).
- Evaluator (of various academic practices).
- Appraiser (helping staff appraise their performance and plan for the future).
- Subversive (helping to foment change).
- Publisher (of research and staff development material).
- Disseminator (of good ideas and useful material).
- Token (proof that the institution takes staff development seriously).
- Leader (blazing a path of best practice for others to follow).
It can never be assumed that staff developers or teaching staff can perform well or comfortably in all of these roles. Self-development is always something to be encouraged, but all of those engaged in staff development need to be helped to re-think their roles and review and re-engineer their services and work schedules. It is crucial therefore that they themselves should be enabled to engage in further training/study, attend and participate in conferences, workshops, seminars, exchange programmes, and so on.

It is therefore important to carry out a training needs analysis of all of the staff developers, establish who has received what training and who needs further training to achieve their personal/professional goals, and develop a short, medium and long term development programme for these personnel. This needs to be constantly monitored and updated. Again, online and flexible learning can be used to develop the capacities of the staff developers.

**Evaluating staff development**

There is no automatic guarantee that any staff development strategy will succeed. Robinson (1998) suggests that evaluating staff development involves considering the context, process and outcomes and asking the following questions:

**Context**

- How accurately were the needs diagnosed? What data were used and how were these analysed?
- Why was this particular training mode/strategy adopted?
- How were the objectives determined? What were the objectives? What kind of outcomes did they focus on? Was the training event appropriate to these needs/ objectives?
- How does this staff development initiative link to the experience of the participants? How does it link to their other training? How does it link to the overall staff development plan?

**Process**

- What resources were available? (human, financial, physical, time). Which of these were actually used? Were these appropriate?
- Was the selection of the participants appropriate?
- What was the participation rate?
- Were there problems of workload, demands placed upon, or time-release for the participants?
- Were the design, organisation and implementation of the staff development appropriate? What is the evidence of this?
- Was this the best or most appropriate way of providing this aspect of professional development?

**Outcomes**

- How many participants were involved?
- What was the short-term impact of the training event on the participants?
- What was the long-term impact?
- Was the training efficient?
- Was it effective?
- Was it cost-effective?
- What remaining or new needs were identified?
- What follow-up or other further action is needed?

There is increasing emphasis on the need to evidence quality and cost-effectiveness in educational performance. There is therefore need for formative and summative evaluation and objective quantified outputs and qualitative findings to evidence the impact of staff development on the institution, the staff, and the students.

**Recognition and reward**

A high profile and high priority need to be given to staff development in the institutional policies, procedures and priorities. Recruitment, position descriptions and appointments and promotion criteria need to evidence the institutional commitment to open and flexible learning, the competencies these require in the staff, and the importance of the staff learning, unlearning and re-learning to stay at the cutting edge of change.

Unfortunately, there is often a wide gulf between the myth and reality of recognition and reward in academia. As Boyer (op cit.) observes, lip service may be paid to the triology of teaching, research and service, but in judging professional performance and promotion, these three activities are rarely assigned equal merit. In the universities, it is usually the case that research is more highly valued than teaching and scant attention is paid to evaluating or formally rewarding staff effort, innovation and achievement in open and flexible learning.

It is critically important that universities ensure that achievements in teaching and open learning are given due weight in confirmations of tenure, accelerated incremental progression and promotion. Hammer and Stanton (1995) suggest that telling staff to change or ‘re-engineer’ what they do and then holding them accountable by the old measures, places staff in an untenable bind. Munitz (op cit.) observes that if institutions don’t mesh the recognition and reward systems to their objectives, the staff will go where the money is, not where the rhetoric is. He argues for institutions to fight this battle early.

It is also the case that traditionally, universities, schools/departments and programmes and their constituent parts have been funded on the basis of historical budget allocations rather than performance and outcomes. Such time-honoured budget-based systems make it difficult to abandon unproductive and obsolete practices. ‘Off-the-top funding’ special grants, fellowships, staff release time, salary supplements, or other compensation and performance recognition systems are important indications of institutional commitment to educational development and innovation and essential for change. Those responsible for reviewing recognition and reward systems need to draw up criteria for performance and excellence in open and flexible learning.
These might be for example:

- Knowledge and competence in open and flexible learning.
- Reflective practice in open and flexible learning.
- Personal engagement in open and flexible learning.
- Ability to use open and flexible learning technology.
- Ability to mentor others working in open and flexible learning.
- Ability to build upon the work of others in the field.
- Ability to generate and test new knowledge and new ways of doing things.
- Ability to lead or work in teams.
- Ability to provide benefits for the students and peers.
- High regard by students.
- High regard by peers.
- Contribution to innovation and change at the course/school/departmental/institutional level.

It is also critically important that institutional commitment to open and flexible learning and the expectations of staff be emphasised in all job advertisements, position descriptions and appraisal/promotions systems. Excellence in teaching awards schemes enable staff to evidence their particular open and flexible learning philosophies, goals, activities and achievements.

Some UK and Australian universities have introduced the idea of ‘teaching portfolios’, documentation prepared by staff to evidence the staff development activities they have engaged in and how they have applied these in the workplace. Teaching portfolios are useful in applying for tenure, promotion, etc., and an excellent way of demonstrating the centrality and valuing of scholarly practice in open and flexible learning.

**Staff development partnerships**

Partnering and forming strategic alliances with other open and flexible learning providers is another way of supporting professional development through further study, visits, secondments, exchanges, etc. Developing an inter-institutional staff development network or consortium can be useful in regions where there is little support infrastructure for staff development. An example of this was the Free State Postcompulsory Education Staff Development Network in South Africa (Hudson & Weir, 1999). Confronted with a bewildering myriad of new policies and demands to change virtually every teaching practice they felt confident and comfortable with, and with only their own resources to fall back on, the teaching staff in these institutions established this Network to cooperate on staff development projects and activities and exchange ideas and share materials on staff development. Through this network, they were able to achieve:

- Workshops and seminars by outside experts.
- Staff induction programmes run by staff teams from participating institutions.
- Policy development for curriculum planning and examinations.
- Development or adaptation of staff development materials for local circumstances.
- Research and materials development for e.g., problem-based and resource-based learning.
- A local conference showcasing projects and their findings.

Again, technology can be used for virtual staff development partnerships.

**Formal study**

Some staff will not only wish to deepen their knowledge and skills in open and flexible learning but do so through some form of formal study. There is an increasing number of Certificate, Diploma, Masters and Doctoral programmes in open learning offered by, for example, the UK Open University, Athabasca University in Canada, and University of Southern Queensland in Australia. Further information about these courses is available through the Commonwealth of Learning (www.col.org).

Some institutions have also developed their own graduate certificate/diploma programmes in higher education teaching and learning. These too can be invaluable and made more widely available across schools/departments and campuses through distance and online learning.

**Conclusion**

Open and flexible learning calls for many new capacities in managers, administrators, teachers, curriculum, course and materials developers, tutors, technology support staff and librarians. It requires roles to be re-engineered and multiple specialists to collaborate in developing new learning, systems, environments and programmes. Most of these staff are busy people who have never had much time to learn about new teaching methods or technology. It is therefore extremely important for institutions to help all of their staff face up to their changed responsibilities.

The extent of staff development needed for such transformation is often seriously under-estimated. Far more is needed than the occasional, short-term, self-contained and voluntary workshop. Supporting moves into open and flexible learning requires a clear vision and strategic plan, total and public commitment by senior and middle managers and strong alignment between the strategic plan, human resource management systems and staff development systems. The institution has to become a learning organisation, acquiring new understandings through a conversational framework and basing its actions upon well-informed reflective practice and action research.
Staff development needs to be linked to quality assurance and continuous performance improvement. A scholarly approach is needed and there should be commensurate recognition, status, release time, reward and support for staff. And the overall culture should be one that encourages risk, innovation and collaboration within and between institutions. The most successful open and flexible learning institutions will be those that thus place prime focus on empowering and developing their staff.

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Colin Latchem is an Australian educational development and open learning consultant with almost forty years' experience of providing leadership and management in this field, mostly in the UK and Australia. Until 1997, he held the position of Head of the Teaching and Learning Group at Curtin University of Technology in Perth Western Australia, where he was responsible for staff development, distance and open learning and instructional media. He also served on the Program Management Committee of Open Learning Australia and from 1995-1997, he was President of the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia (ODLAA). Since retiring from his full-time position at Curtin he has been consulting in Australia, the Pacific, SE Asia and the Caribbean, a visiting professor in Japan researching open and distance education in South and East Asia and engaged in researching, speaking at conferences and writing. He has written and co-authored many works including Staff Development in Open and Flexible Learning (Kogan Page, 1998), Leadership for 21st Century Learning (Routledge, 2001) and Teacher Education through Open and Distance Learning (Routledge, 2003).

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Introduction

What is it about technology in the classroom that sends shudders down the spine?

From the point of view of computer enthusiasts, the benefits are usually obvious. As with any professional grouping, they are in the loop and get to see the latest applications and how they are being put to good use in case studies. Having evaluated the options carefully and made a recommendation to their institution, they are keen to see them exploited in the classroom.

From the point of view of University managers, the use of technology in the classroom is often presented as a solution to an overall problem:

- Recruitment too low? Use distance learning to teach students who can’t get to campus!
- Not enough lecture theatres? Put lecture notes on line for students to read when they like!
- Need more overseas students? Teach online so people don’t have to move!

and so on. I’m sure that these crass, exaggerated examples have never been suggested at MMU, but they are offered simply to illustrate the kinds of issues which might be thought to be ‘solvable’ with a large scale technological solution.

However, have we paid enough attention to the points of view of the people who will actually get to use these technologies in the classroom? Higher Education has a long history of trying but failing to integrate learning technologies into day to day teaching(1). This paper will attempt to answer three questions about this:

- Why is information technology so difficult to integrate into mainstream classroom activity?
- Is this a problem?
- If it is a problem, what can be done?

Reactions to new technology

Higher Education is not the only sector where technology is treated with a mixture of feelings. A frequently quoted work is that of Rogers, who characterised the uptake of technology in a completely different sector (Iowa farmers) in terms of the personalities and motivations of individual users (2). Under this model, technology is adopted, or not, according to how it appeals to five groups: Innovators, Early Adopters, Early Majority, Late Majority and Laggards. The speed with which an entire community adopts a technology is shown in Rogers’ ‘Technology Adoption Lifecycle’ (figure 1), which shows what percentage of a community might be actively involved in learning about and implementing a technology as a function of (an unspecified duration of) time. This is a useful model for identifying roughly how far things have progressed in a particular situation.