staff development forum

From the Chair

Sue Law, SDF Chair

Welcome to this, our Winter 2009/10 edition of Update. We're very pleased to report that good progress is being made as we work through our business plan—and to offer you a glimpse of what's in store in 2010.

Probably of greatest importance is the fact that our programme of more regular CPD events is now under way. It's great that these are being delivered through our Regional Groups—and we are hopeful that these opportunities will grow through 2010 and beyond—so please support them and encourage the growth of our programme! The associated CPD accreditation scheme is taking shape and we hope soon to be able to provide fuller details.

The SDF 2010 Spring Conference is now fully planned, and complements the much larger (and more expensive!) Autumn Conference which we run jointly with the LFHE. Despite the prospect—and reality—of reduced budgets across the HE system, we believe that our Spring Conference offers an excellent opportunity for networking and professional learning so please save the dates (29/30 April) in your diaries.

We hope that by now you'll have become aware of our 'all new' SDF website. A lot of work has gone into its development (for which many thanks to the team!) and aside from the occasional 'tweak' we anticipate that it will be very much our public face (and more) in the foreseeable future. Please look there for updated SDF information, but do also please log-on and join in or generate discussions… ! We look forward to hearing your feedback and suggestions. Perhaps you'll find SDF's JISCmail list useful for mutual information distribution and the SDF web discussion forums for… exactly that, discussions!

Despite the difficult economic climate and challenging times for higher education, these are busy and exciting times for SDF..... so much so that Council has approved a proposal that we offer a part-time 'National Coordinator' post to help us drive forward our agenda and accomplish our objectives. Please read on and find out about more about that—and about what else is going on in this part of your professional world!

Have FUN! (Find out, Unravel your thoughts, Network)

As we go to print, the following SDF events are scheduled:

January 29	**MOSAIC - Train the Trainer** event to be held at the University of Strathclyde
February 8	**Action Learning Facilitation** to be held at Loughborough University
March 4	**Coaching your Team** to be held at the University of Ulster Belfast City Centre Campus
March 19	**Leading the Staff Development Function in HEIs – A Workshop for Heads of Units** to be held at the University of Manchester

And, most importantly…

Bristol, April 29 & 30: **SDF SPRING CONFERENCE: From Staff Developer to Internal Consultant?** (see back page)

Further details of SDF events are available on the website.

staff development forum

Part-time post available with the SDF

Salary negotiable, around £10K plus expenses
Hours negotiable, but expect at least 20% FTE (approx. 1 day a week)

Details of an exciting new part-time (0.2 fte minimum) post with the SDF are currently being circulated. This post will provide an opportunity for an ambitious and self-motivated individual to work with the SDF to ensure that staff development gains a higher national profile in HE within the UK, and that the SDF supports its community as effectively as possible.

The post of National Coordinator is offered for one year initially and will be ideal as a secondment for someone who is already working as an experienced staff developer, or someone who has strong project management skills and an understanding of the staff or professional learning and development environment within the HE context.

This is a strategic role with a significant emphasis on managing a diverse portfolio of services/activities, so we expect the successful candidate to be capable of thinking strategically as well as have the ability to coordinate operational tasks so that SDF is able to move forward with pace towards achieving its goals and targets over the next few years.

A key part of the role over the next year will be to help establish the developing SDF CPD programme and, in particular, the suite of four newly accredited awards that have been developed in collaboration with the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA).

Please see the SDF website for further details.

SDF UPDATE

Creativity in Translation

You're standing in a room full of HE Developers and one walks to the centre of the room. They draw a sheet of paper from the white envelope they have been given and read aloud the enclosed statement. It says 'I am creative in my work'.

You now have to decide how much *you* would apply that statement to yourself. What you believe dictates where you will go and stand in the room.

Do you go toward the person who read the statement because you think you are quite creative? Or do you move away from them?

OK—everyone in the room has repositioned themselves—so where are you standing?

Eye-ball to eye-ball with the reader, or downstairs in the foyer?

You've just experienced a creative approach. As a participant in this exercise, what did you learn?

If you were the facilitator watching where people stand, what would you learn? What discussion would it prompt? What other statements would you place in envelopes for participants to read out and scale themselves to?

The Northern Ireland Staff Development Forum's Creativity in Translation was all about *how we can get creative*.

Two back-to-back events, run over one and a half days, were packed with creative activities like the visual scaling described above. All with the perfect venue backdrop of the University of Ulster's new City Campus, located in the heart of Belfast's cultural Cathedral Quarter and the centre for their Art and Design programmes.

These two events were not about naval gazing the meaning of life, the universe or indeed creativity—it was about giving it a go. Experienced facilitators illustrated a million and one practical ways developers can get creative in their design and delivery. Well, I exaggerate slightly—but there was definitely something for everyone no matter how creative you thought you were or weren't (even if you were standing in the foyer!)

Our first event was kicked off by Anna Newell[1] as we tried out a range of short snappy ways to help our participants relax, connect quickly with each other, share useful information and all without the embarrassment or cringe-making sometimes associated with a 'creative' approach.

Something a little different!

Ten minutes later, relaxed, laughing, energised and ready for more, Caroline van den Brul[2] took over as facilitator. With over 30 years experience with BBC production and editing, what Caroline doesn't know about getting the audience interested—and sustaining that engagement—just isn't worth knowing! We explored approaches from Story Boarding to Story Telling, interlaced with a plethora of quick and easy to use creative thinking approaches guaranteed to unlock problems and unstick stuck thinking.

After a glass of festive mulled wine (perhaps two) we were back in Anna's facilitative hands for the rest of the afternoon. We created visual metaphors that unlocked ideas more quickly than any case study ever could! We learnt about development approaches that are quick, non-threatening and fun—and yet work at the deeper values and beliefs level that lie behind our behaviours, where reflection and shifts can bring about much more meaningful change than even the most stimulating PowerPoint presentation.

Event two was about putting the 'e' into 'creative' as Developers explored ways to integrate technology into their delivery. Under the experienced eye of Kenny McCarten and Vicky Davies[3] we were let loose and created quizzes using audience response systems. We learnt how to use Camtasia to make visual and audio recordings and fought over the tablet laptops as we put the touch into touch screen technology and the active into interactive. The future of the Flip Chart looked uncertain.

The feedback has been fantastic and a follow up evaluation will ask how we are applying our new ideas. We're all creative—it is just a matter of degree. We have the skills, we can learn the theory. So just throw in that willingness to give it a go. You won't regret it.

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[1] Anna is Artistic Director of CECPA(NI), the Centre for Excellence in the Creative and Performing Arts at Queens University

[2] Caroline is also an Associate of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education and came to us as a result of Queens and Ulster combining their free consultancy day for LFHE members

[3] Kenny McCartan, Project Coordinator (Technology Adoption) and Vicky Davies, Staff Development Officer, (e-learning), University of Ulster

Ideas Corner

An Ice-breaker: JIGSAWS
Denise Fieldhouse, Staff development Adviser, University of Manchester

This is a really great ice-breaker for larger group events or conferences with upwards of 70 people. It can be used to assign people to groups, get delegates moving around and talking to each other, and generally getting energy levels up. Let's say you are working with a group of 100 people and want to assign them to sub groups of 10 people. You buy a child's 10 piece jigsaw, for each group of 10 people, and give delegates a piece of this jigsaw on arrival. They are then asked to search out the other 9 people who have the other bits of their jigsaw. Individuals will have to get round as many people as possible to find their colleagues who have the matching other bits of their jigsaw. Once a couple of people find complementary pieces they tend to hunt in packs looking for the people who hold the remaining pieces. They construct the jigsaw together and then work in the same group throughout the event.

You can introduce several twists:
- Deliberately give an incomplete jigsaw
- Introduce a competitive element—first to complete
- Buy a jigsaw with a theme that matches the development event and ask the groups to present how their jigsaw relates to the event
- Make your own jigsaw and laminate the pieces
- Use very similar jigsaw designs to make the ice-breaker more difficult
- You could make this really difficult by giving delegates a blank jigsaw piece (no image at all) and asking them to find the other pieces

Have fun!

Odette Dewhurst (pictured) from the University of Leeds tells us about an innovative programme designed to support researchers new to grant writing—and thereby increase the University's research income...

How to write grants and win funding: Grant Writing Programmes for Academic and Research Staff

Writing successful grant applications is one of the most challenging aspects of life for those in academic research, and many face rejection several times before securing research income as Principal Investigator. Researchers who are new to writing grant applications can find the whole process particularly daunting, increasingly so in the current economic environment where they face intensified competition for those elusive grants.

The University of Leeds is a research intensive university and recognises that it is vital to support staff as they apply for research funding in order to both grow our market share of research income and develop our staff; both are key parts of our strategy to be one of the top 50 universities in the world by 2015. We have provided development opportunities for grant writing for many years, however in 2005 we expanded our provision to include a new format of bespoke programmes for academic and research staff, providing them with structured guidance and support as they prepare a grant application.

The programmes vary in length between three and twelve months, with the timescale of each being influenced by the funding scheme and needs of the group. Each is led by a staff developer (with a research background) from the Staff and Departmental Development Unit (SDDU) and an academic (usually a Faculty Pro-Dean for Research). Additional support is provided by academics and staff from the faculty research offices. This team guides a group of up to 14 staff, nominated by their Directors of Research, through the entire process of writing and submitting a grant application, including topics such as: preparing a case for support, university and funding body processes, preparing impact statements and understanding how the review process works.

A key part of each programme is the peer review process whereby each member of the group submits their completed application for review by two other participants, plus the programme team. This ensures that everyone receives detailed feedback on their proposal from a varied audience and, by acting as reviewers themselves, they not only gain an insight into the challenges faced by reviewers but also develop their experience of providing feedback to their peers.

The first programmes began by focussing on one particular funding scheme and have subsequently grown and developed so that we now work with staff across eight of our nine faculties as they apply for funding to a range of funding bodies, most of which are Research Councils. To date, over 60 staff have taken part in the programmes and approximately £13M of funding applications have been submitted as part of the programmes. We track the outcomes of applications submitted as part of the programme and have found that grants submitted by participants have a higher chance of being funded (33%) than the national averages for the same funding schemes (16-26%). By tracking the grants submitted by participants in the months/years after completion of one of these programmes, we also found that 62% of these grant applications were successful.

We are continuing to develop, expand and evaluate these programmes and we have adapted the format to support researchers applying for fellowships. Several other HEIs are interested to adopt this format for delivery within their own institutions.

For further information on the work at Leeds, please contact Dr Odette Dewhurst, Research Training and Development Officer, email l.o.dewhurst@adm.leeds.ac.uk

Staff Development Conference 2009

We asked some delegates for their views—'warts and all' — and here is what they said*

I thoroughly enjoyed the conference. Venue excellent; all very well thought through in terms of logistics; one or two keynotes were outstanding. Talking to colleagues gave me food for thought.
Malcolm Armstrong, University of Worcester

This conference is always good for catching up with colleagues from other universities and meeting people who are new to the role or sector. Hearing about the work of other institutions was powerful for me this year and I left with a long list of new things I am inspired to try, and people to approach.
Lynne Howlett, Newcastle University

The conference provided time to think about the Staff Development function within HE and what I need to do if I'm going to be as effective as possible, given the current climate. Insights into OD were extremely useful and have prompted me to reflect on my current practice and skills. And it was great to meet others from within the sector—exchange experiences and find out what others are up to. The workshops were interesting, I particularly enjoyed Paul Blackmore's insight into academics motivation... I think it's crucial as a practitioner to ask yourself the 'what's in it for me' question from others' perspectives. And the NESD chocolates were delicious!
Emily Hopkinson, University of Sheffield

As ever I came away with three or four really good pinchable ideas. So thank you for: colleagues who provided the parallel sessions; some wider musings from the plenaries; a warm glow from having partaken beers with longstanding immediate and wider colleagues within the HE staff development community; and a re-confirmed sense of purpose in what we do. All very good but I confess that at the same time on my evaluation form I hinted at a sense of *deja vu*, business as usual, predictability ... and asking myself where was the 'wow factor' and wondered if anyone had any views that might contribute to a wider debate about what SDF/LF provides for members of the staff development community.
Paul Dixon, Manchester University

In terms of highs from the Conference: the NESD chocolates; the opportunity to spend time with other NESD members (but sadness that some couldn't be there because of lack of funds); good to hear about what other groups were doing; the MBTI workshop; Emily's 'path' workshop. Not as impressed by the key speakers—seemed a bit cliquey and a 'should be' rather than an 'as is' agenda.
Linda Marshall, University of Hull

I found the conference really useful as it gave me time to step back and think about what we are doing at the University of Essex. I found the evaluation sessions interesting because I realised in some areas we are performing extremely well and in other areas we need to do some more work. It was good to hear about Staff Development from the LFHE's point of view. The networking was extremely valuable and I came away with some new ideas. The whole event was extremely well organised and I thought the hotel was perfect—good location, and good sized rooms. And from a new-comer's point of view it felt very friendly.
*Mandy Anslow, University of Essex*

* The views expressed are those of the individuals and not of the SDF. However, we note the widespread praise for the NESD chocolates!

Resource Review

We intend that this section becomes a regular feature, where members of our community present a short review of their own 'must see/read/own' resource—whether a book or film or other resource—that can inform our work in HE. If you would like to offer a review, please send it to one of the editorial team (see below)

In this edition, Paul Dixon from University of Manchester introduces what he considers a classic text within the field of organisational analysis, and a 'must read' for all those engaged in organisational change and development:
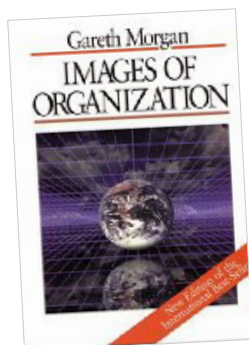
Images of Organization. **Gareth Morgan. Sage: London 1986**

At the recent LF/SDF Annual Conference José Chambers shared with colleagues some of the initial feedback relating to her project looking into what is needed to be an Effective Internal OD practitioner in HE. José fed back results of a mini-survey of members of the ODHE group and colleagues attending the Conference. Whilst many agreed that it was 'vital to be able to establish credibility with a diverse range of colleagues' and vital to know about 'the strategic goals of (their) University', only 18% of the ODHE group and 26% of SDF colleagues felt it was necessary to know about 'Recent research on organisational behaviour'. Whilst none of us has the time, or space, to be as well research informed as we might wish, if you are looking for a theoretical starting point to underpin your OD practice look no further.

Images of Organization asks us to reconsider the rational, tidy, linear and functional perspectives we often lazily adopt in thinking about what organisations are and, by implication, how we develop them. This book, by contrast, offers up a range of ways of thinking about organisations through metaphor—and therein lies its power.

As developers we can often make the assumption that our own organisational 'worldview' is shared by others, and either fail to recognise the various ways in which an organisation is seen and experienced or, more dangerously, regard it as our duty to bring others round to our own world view—and unsurprisingly we experience some resistance! Effective OD proceeds from working with others' experienced subjective reality of the organisation, not our own.

Gareth Morgan offers up a series of powerful metaphors to help us see different aspects of organisational existence thereby enhancing our understanding. Morgan suggests that thinking of organisations as machines, as brains, as political systems, as instruments of domination, as organisms and so on... can help us develop greater analytical capability and purchase. And the greater the understanding, the greater our capacity to influence, advise and support the organisation in moving forward.

If colleagues relish a challenge they might wish to dip into the earlier, more academic, 'Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis' by Burrell and Morgan (1979)—but be warned, this is not for the faint hearted. *Images of Organization* is, by contrast, more accessible and definitely worth the asking price to dip into now and then, to refresh your organisational thinking and imagination…

Enjoy!

SPRING CONFERENCE
Bristol, 29th & 30th April 2010

staff development forum

From Staff Developer to Internal Consultant?

The SDF is delighted to announce details of the Spring 2010 Conference which will take place on the 29th and 30th April at the luxury 4 star Mercure Holland House Hotel and Spa in Bristol, which is only a short walk from Bristol Temple Meads mainline station. It's easily accessible by car (and has its own car park) while Bristol airport is just 20 minutes away by the shuttle bus service. The city of Bristol itself has many attractions with the old city, historic harbour and busy shopping centre—all just a few minutes walk from the hotel.

The Conference will commence at 11 a.m. on day one, with refreshments from 10 a.m. It closes at 3 p.m. on day two. We have negotiated extremely good rates for delegates who wish to continue their stay into the weekend, or arrive the day before.

The theme of the Conference is the changing role of staff developers, and is aimed at exploring the range of professional expertise that staff and organisational developers now need to possess to do their jobs effectively.

The conference programme has been designed specifically to provide a relaxing and revitalising environment in which to network with colleagues and presenters and to provide dynamic and challenging sessions aimed at developing new insights and new skills.

We hope that delegates will leave the conference energised, enthused and equipped with new ideas and skills, ready to tackle the challenges ahead.

The cost is £290 per person—which includes use of the pool and gym during your stay. Places are limited so do book early. Conference booking will open early in the New Year with the application form and further details downloadable from the SDF website. To secure a place you may register your interest beforehand by emailing Clive Betts c.r.betts@exeter.ac.uk

> *Also—don't forget the range of professional development events being offered by the SDF. Those in the first part of this year are listed on the front page.*
>
> *The range will extend during the year, and will support a new CPD scheme from the SDF—details soon!*

About *Update*—and a call for contributions

Update is the twice-yearly newsletter of the Staff Development Forum. Limited numbers of paper copies are distributed to HEIs in the UK, and it is available as a PDF download from the SDF website. If you would like to share news or a practical tip or information about a resource, or have a suggestion or comment on this issue, then we'd like to hear from you. Just contact one of the editorial team, listed below.