



## staff development forum

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### From the Chair



*SDF Chair, Sandy Wilkie*

Welcome to the first SDF newsletter, a publication that will become established as a twice yearly (Spring and Autumn) component of our communications strategy. And 'strategy' was what the members of the SDF Council gathered to discuss at a residential meeting in Leeds in January.

Over the last six months, we have been working with John Doidge on future sustainability options for the

SDF network. After very productive meetings with key stakeholder organisations, we emerged with a new funding offer from the Leadership Foundation. Predicated on the basis of a 5% top-slice of the LFHE subscription fee, with a cap at £40K per annum, the 4-year deal from August 2008 represents a significantly improved and more stable basis for the operation of the SDF. It will enable us to make longer term plans to support CPD at the national and regional

levels, and give us the flexibility to develop strategic alliances with other professional networks like UPA and SEDA. It also gives the SDF freedom to generate other income, like our current HEFCE LGM work on project dissemination, to support our activities.

I am pleased to say that the SDF Council members voted unanimously in favour of the LFHE deal. Over the next few months, we will be working to review SDF structures and put in place a business plan for the next two years. This should consolidate our status as a proactive network organisation, linking the regional staff development groups and providing national opportunities for learning and development for staff development practitioners. Expect more activities like the new SDF Spring Conference being held at UEA – and if you are going, I will see you there!

I will be completing my term as SDF Chair at the end of July 2008, after nearly 2 years in the post. I'd like to think that with the help of an active SDF Council and some proactive Task Groups, we have helped demystify the whole SDF concept and begun to demonstrate tangible support for practitioners at the individual, regional and national levels. I'll be handing over a sustainable SDF to the new Chair, Sue Law from Coventry, on 1<sup>st</sup> August. My only wish is to see the SDF continue to develop and thrive into 2009 and beyond.

*Sandy Wilkie, SDF Chair, February 2008*

### From the editors

Please note that SDF Update will also be available as a PDF download from the SDF website, to reduce the number of paper copies sent to institutions. We had so much to say in this first edition that we have adopted newspaper-sized print. Is that acceptable? All comments welcome! Our contact details are at the bottom of the back page.

## SPRING CONFERENCE

**1-2 April 2008**



*UEA is on a modern campus at the edge of Norwich,  
the most complete mediaeval city in Britain*

To bridge the gap between the annual conferences for staff developers in HE, held each November, the SDF is offering a short residential conference at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, on 1-2 April. We hope that a Spring Conference will become a regular part of the staff developers' calendar.

The programme this year features the topical debate about the interface between OD, HR and Staff Development, a debate that is highly significant in helping us think about our future. The

elements of the programme are designed to help equip us for that future, however it should turn out at any particular HEI. The conference will provide stimulating input and opportunity to use (and learn about) a variety of delivery techniques, besides offering good networking opportunities and a chance to explore how co-mentoring can work for you.

Details and a booking form are on the SDF website, but hurry—the applications deadline is 13 March!

Visit the Staff Development Forum website

[www.staffdevelopment.ac.uk](http://www.staffdevelopment.ac.uk)

## Profile



Sue Law, incoming Chair of the SDF

**Sue Law, Professor of Education and Head of Research in the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) at Coventry University, becomes the SDF Chair on 1 August 2008.**

**In this short interview with the SDF Update editorial team, Sue tells us more about her background:**

*Can you give us an overview of your experiences to date in HE?*

They're quite varied! I've been lucky enough to work in six very different universities (plus FE colleges and schools) which means I've had some pretty varied academic and HR/administrative experiences. I hope I've learnt a lot

about leading (and experiencing!) change, and about how various interest groups in HE deal with competing demands.

*It sounds like you've had an interesting career so far; what are some of the highlights?*

Before joining Coventry, I was head of the Centre for Academic Practice at Warwick University where I led some major changes in its profile of activities. Before that, I was Head of a large Education department at Nottingham Trent University (based in five buildings on two sites!) where I led a major change agenda and took the Faculty through QAA Subject Review. At Keele I established, 'from the ground up', a CPD Unit in the School of Education and, amongst other things, started an MBA Education (which is still going strong!) Before that, I taught at Liverpool and Staffordshire Universities.

*And you've published 3 books and a variety of articles around your research interests, haven't you?*

Yes, I'm particularly interested in the impact of CPD and what makes for effective educational leadership and management - and in turn, how it impacts on teaching/learning. I've recently been involved in ESRC-funded research exploring the nature of effective research leadership and project management in the social sciences. I've also been involved in an HEA-funded research project investigating course and module leaders' capabilities and professional needs, currently an under-researched area.

*So what's your current involvement in the SDF?*

I coordinate the interestingly named 'M1/M69 Network', one of SDF's 12 regional groups, so I'm a member of the SDF Council\*. During 2007 I was also elected Deputy Chair of SDF Council.

*Looking to the future, what plans do you have for the SDF?*

As incoming Chair, I'm keen that we build on the effective platform of achievement we've established in recent years. We need to raise our profile further, build strategic alliances and engage in dialogue (not just amongst ourselves!) with the various organisations involved in commissioning and/or providing staff and professional development in HE.

*How can SDF members continue to be involved in shaping their network, the SDF?*

I'd encourage SDF members to give us feedback - and offer ideas - on developments and ways forward, particularly through their regional group co-ordinator... and of course, keep an eye on SDF's developing website!

*Thanks very much, Sue.*

*\* Editor's note: regional group co-ordinators, task group co-ordinators and co-opted members together make up the SDF Council — see the SDF website [www.staffdevelopment.ac.uk](http://www.staffdevelopment.ac.uk), and click Council*

## Action (Learning) around the Regions



**Midlands Staff Development Partnership**  
Supporting Professional Development in Higher Education

### Learning about Action Learning!



On 18 January 2008, seventeen Staff Developers from twelve different institutions in the Midlands region gathered at The Stable Block, a De Montfort University building, to explore their understanding and use of action learning as a development tool in a University context.

As well as developing their knowledge and understanding of the action learning process, participants commented that they gained practical experience of the various roles of presenter, set member and facilitator. Many are now pursuing opportunities to develop their AL facilitation skills for use in local management and leadership development programmes and ongoing regional sets.

The event was run by Ann Baughan (De Montfort), Andy Wilson (Loughborough) and Sally Bernham (Northampton). Commenting after the event, Ann

said, 'it was a highly successful day; a brilliant opportunity for staff developers to get together and share experiences whilst also learning about facilitating a powerful development activity to promote in their own institutions, particularly for senior leaders.'

For further information on this event and on MSDP, contact Ann Baughan, Chair of MSDP, [ABaughan@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:ABaughan@dmu.ac.uk)



Leadership Development  
for Principal Investigators  
[www.le.ac.uk/researchleader](http://www.le.ac.uk/researchleader)

### Action Learning for Principle Investigators

Focusing on the leadership and management role of PIs and grant holders, this HEFCE LGM funded project is now offering PIs in the East Midlands region the opportunity to take part in Action Learning between March and June 2008. Details from Jane Wellens at University of Leicester, [jw27@le.ac.uk](mailto:jw27@le.ac.uk)

### Coming soon to Northern Ireland...

### An Introduction to Action Learning for Staff Developers

John Doidge, Professional Development Consultant for the SDF, has been commissioned to run this one day event in May for Staff Developers in the NISDF regional group. It will cover some basic action learning principles and skills, enabling participants to transfer their new understanding to practical application in their own institutions and region.



Further information will be sent to NISDF regional group members shortly.

NISDF Coordinator,  
Clare Madden.



John Doidge

Communicate news or needs via the Staff Development Forum email list  
[sdf@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:sdf@jiscmail.ac.uk)



# Project News

## Matt Levi is in the SWIMM with HEATED 2...



Following the successful LGM 2 bid last year **HEATED 2** is well on its way to meeting all of the HEATED report recom-

mendations, and we had a good start to this year, making the front page of the THE the first week of January. HEATED has recently joined forces with the IST (Institute of Science and Technology) so it now has an organisation and infrastructure to support its activities. A first UK-wide conference will be held in Manchester on the 10th June. HEATED are working with goodpractice.net in developing an innovative VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) to cover the breadth of technical/specialist disciplines and we will be looking to the technical HE community to help develop and populate the site.

We have also been working with ECC LTD on developing a range of role profiles which can be used as a needs analysis entry point for a new CPD programme for Technical/Specialists to be launched at the conference later this year. This programme will be suitable for all Technical/Specialists, regardless of grade or position, as it is designed to meet the personal development needs of individuals.

The VLE will also support people undertaking the CPD programme, with a wide range of online learning resources only available to registered participants. As well as the CPD programme we have been working towards putting on specialist skills events which we hope to increase and roll out over the duration of the project and beyond. Details of all programmes will be available on the VLE when it is launched in April this year.

The HEATED Steering Group has been active in promoting this important project, and we anticipate applying to HEFCE for further funding to help promote and roll out more workshops and CPD events.

## SWIMM (South West Institutions Middle Managers Programme)



This programme has been developed and piloted successfully by a group of HR Professionals and managers in the Region who are involved in supporting management development. It gives middle managers the opportunity to reflect on their role and develop further some key management skills and techniques needed in today's universities.

Whilst single HEIs provide an excellent range of management programmes for their own use, there is a huge benefit

in working regionally with exposure to a wider range of practices. This programme shares ideas and resources and avoids unnecessary duplication in serving this particular client group.

By running this as an integrated, blended learning programme we are able to introduce tools and concepts in a supportive atmosphere, away from the normal working environment, and build a future resource for the region. It offers colleagues an ideal opportunity to liaise and network with peers in similar roles from across the sector and to have access to the SWIMM network and its learning events and resources over a 12 month period and beyond. The programme was over-subscribed last year and following excellent reviews places are in high demand.

The team behind the project come from the awkwardly titled 'South Wales and West of England Staff Development Group', and the project itself has been attracting the attention of interested colleagues outside of the region.

The SWIMM team is Angie Allcock (Bath), Pam Fitzsimmons (UWE), Matt Levi and Claire Lambert (Exeter), Anne Miller (Bristol) and Andrew Morgan (Swansea).

## ... and we discover 'Facilitation Time Lords'

*A fascinating experiment on facilitation has just got underway at the Centre for Staff and Educational Development at the University of East Anglia. It's SYNERGY, an LFHE-funded Small Development Project, due to report in November. The project director, Nigel Curson, explains...*

Many of us are used to running facilitated groups. You get 'ordinary' facilitation, World Cafés, Action Learning Sets, Balint groups, Creative Problem Solving groups and so on. And the expectation is that everyone turns up at the appointed hour in the appointed place, and it happens. Sometimes we use videoconferencing or teleconferencing to include others in the session, and that's fine if it helps get the right people involved. But they still have to be available at the right time, and that's often easier said than done. Especially if you're seeking to involve the 'movers and shakers', who rarely have a free slot in their diaries!

So what's the new angle? Well, at UEA for a long time we've been using software in our i-Lab that aids the conventional facilitation process. Amongst other things it offers anonymous brainstorming, categorising and voting – and it's been really useful. Now we've recently upgraded to web-based software that's marketed to do the same thing, but it occurred to us that once we have web-based software then, in principle, the facilitator and the group participants could be located... well, just anywhere.

And then we got to thinking that sometimes any of us can have afterthoughts that we wished we had contributed to a brainstorm, and gradually the idea emerged that the software would enable us to try not only *distributed*, but *asynchronous* facilitation – whereby contributions would be expected not at the same time, but

rather within a timeframe as specified by the facilitator. Maybe a day or two to post brainstorm items, then a day allocated to voting on ideas – or whatever was appropriate.

And the beauty of it is that this offers the potential to overcome 'the diary problem', assuming that even the busiest people can find the odd minute to contribute to the group. So we hope that we can move closer to always having the right people participating in facilitated groups, even if they have diaries so full that they cannot give one or two consecutive hours.

Of course, there are challenges in all of this and some of the drawbacks of not being 'gathered' in the facilitated group are immediately obvious – and we will consider how these might be addressed. We also need to think about impact on workflow/work-life balance of shoe-horning yet another activity into a busy day. And again, we realise that this different approach simply may not work in all cases. But that's the point of the project – to check it out and report back to the community.

For further details please see [www.uea.ac.uk/csed/projects/synergy](http://www.uea.ac.uk/csed/projects/synergy)



*Does facilitation have to be a 'same place, same time' activity?*

**For your diary...**

**Annual Staff Developers' Conference**

**Edinburgh — 5-7th November 2008**

Join in SDF discussions on the wiki at

[www.staffdevelopment.ac.uk](http://www.staffdevelopment.ac.uk)



## Helping Projects Transfer Practice

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) puts lots of money into 'change projects'. Many of these are intended to promote the transfer of practice between universities; few actually achieve this.

The group that runs HEFCE's Leadership, Governance and Management (LGM) stream of projects is especially concerned about this. They have therefore invited the SDF to offer guidance on how to make the effective transfer of practice more likely.

A project team, jointly led by Sandy Wilkie (Chair of the SDF) and Andy Wilson (Loughborough University) involves staff development colleagues from Exeter, St Andrews and Ulster. They anticipate that phase 1 will be completed by April 2008. The SDF was awarded £30K to complete this work. The project is generating around £8K profit for the SDF, to be

re-invested into CPD activities for the community.

The team has already gathered data from many projects and has presented its interim recommendations at a joint LGM/Leadership Foundation event in January 2008. A key theme of their approach is that to have any hope of transfer, you need to know *why* something works where it does succeed.

Work is now underway on producing frameworks and checklists that will form part of the LGM processes for selecting projects. The approach will readily transfer to other contexts as well.

If you would like to contribute project dissemination experiences or have an interest in this area, the project team would be happy to hear from you. Contact Dr Andy Wilson, D.A.Wilson@lboro.ac.uk

## And not forgetting...

### SDF website and the wild wicked wiki's!

The SDF made an official presence on the world wide web, by launching [www.staffdevelopment.ac.uk](http://www.staffdevelopment.ac.uk) at the SDF conference in Liverpool, 2006. Since its inception there have been calls from users that the website be more than just an 'electronic brochure', and be more interactive and engaging; something that would match educational/staff developers' intrinsic approach of communication and collaboration.

By the SDF conference in Brighton 2007, a web task group had formed to experiment with Wiki technology, where every member of the community has access and privileges to contribute with little or no technical knowledge. The result was that the SDF site rapidly grew with areas for public information and for members only, with a dedicated virtual space for discussion on any subject.

The SDF website is now emerging as a key feature and important channel of communication, and so the Web Strategy Group is working with the ILRT Bristol to further develop the provision so that the final product can:

- facilitate internal and external communication in the SDF community
- allow ease of use and navigation for both contributors and users
- allow swift information retrieval
- engender confidence in using the website among the less-technical
- encourage sharing of practice
- facilitate online discussion and debate about topical subjects.

If you have ideas to share on these developments, or concerns to air, please do so — via email to Mohamed Kassam, MKassam@dmu.ac.uk

### e-Staff Development Network

The eSDN aims to provide SDF members with online processes that support the sharing and networking that lies at the heart of the SDF's approach. It works with the staff development community, models good practice, and provides support, advice, and examples of good practice in new technologies.

The eSDN is very much in its initial stages under the sponsorship of the SDF. With little promotion it already has 47 members (33 institutions). Some of the future activities are:

- writing of a paper on the theme of 'e-learning is for staff developers too!' — a project which may be the first of its kind, using a virtual collaborative tool to allow the SDF community to write a paper
- producing a flyer, and contacting other networks for promotion
- a monthly e-newsletter that will inform education/staff developers about technologies related to their work or interests
- a yearly mini-symposium for members to share ideas.

For more details email Mohamed Kassam, MKassam@dmu.ac.uk

### Coaching and Mentoring in HE

Staff Developers from eight different HEIs are working to assemble information, resources and exchange mechanisms for use by those in the community interested in effective coaching and mentoring, both for their own CPD, and for the benefit of HE staff more generally in their institution. Priority activities for 2008 were agreed at a recent meeting and include:

- offering 'how to' guidelines and tips in getting going with co-mentoring and facilitating co-mentor 'matching' at the SDF Spring Conference
- promoting existing CPD frameworks for HE staff development practitioners and leaders (<http://www.staffdevelopment.ac.uk/projects/>) as a basis for their own CPD coaching/mentoring discussions
- mapping existing UK provision of coaching/mentoring qualifications and memberships
- evaluating the UK-wide pilot ILM Diploma in Management Coaching and Mentoring, provided in partnership by the SDF and CALM
- promoting the sharing of existing HEI coaching/mentoring schemes.

The Coaching and Mentoring online network is already up and running and will develop significantly during 2008 — it's open to everyone in the SDF community. Go to the SDF website: [www.staffdevelopment.ac.uk](http://www.staffdevelopment.ac.uk)

### Organisational Development in HE Group

This group has existed in different forms since the early 1990s and some of its original members still participate, though the group has always welcomed newcomers. Originally convened by Bob Thackwray as an IIP practitioners self-help group, it now operates as a long-standing community of practice and continuing professional development network. It has around 30 members, from different institutions across the UK.

Led by José Chambers, Professor of Organisational Learning and Assistant Vice Chancellor at the University of Winchester, the group now get together for two residential meetings and one one-day meeting per year. Members use the opportunity to share progress on OD work in which they are directly involved and to learn from good practice taking place elsewhere. At their last meeting on 12 February 2008 in York, members had the chance to compare the experiences of practitioners at Leeds and Sheffield, which have both been engaged in major OD initiatives over recent years.

Anyone attending the SDF Spring Conference (see front page) can learn more about OD in HE and explore the role of Staff Developers in organisational change and development in their own institution.

Online materials arising from the HEFCE LGM project on 'Enhancing Organisational Development Capability in English Universities', which first grew out of discussions at the ODHE group, can be found on the LFHE website: <http://www.lfhe.ac.uk/networks/od/>

## Call for contributions

The next edition of the SDF Update is due out in August/September 2008. If you have news you would like to share, suggestions, or comments on this issue, then we'd like to hear from you. Just contact one of the Editorial and Production Team, listed below.

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