Exchange Study Trip 2002

Report of the ALT / SURF UK Trip, April 2002

October 2002
SURF 20023325

Colofon

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Introduction

At the ALT Conference in Edinburgh, 11-13 September 2001, the SURF Foundation (Stichting SURF) and the British Association for Learning Technology (ALT) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to form a strategic alliance.
This MoU provides a framework to establish better contacts between the UK and the Netherlands in the field of learning technologies and to explore the possibilities of working together. The conferences of ALT-C and SURF are opportunities to establish and build upon these contacts. One of the interesting ideas that came up during these first contacts was to organise exchange Study Trips.

The first exchange Study Trip was organised by SURF from the 21st till the 26th of April 2002. A large group of Dutch colleagues visited several higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. During this trip experiences were shared and discussed, leading to new insight and better understanding; new contacts were established and possible collaborative projects were initiated.

The Dutch participants wrote down their experiences and SURF Foundation has published these impressions in this report. Wim de Boer and Petra Fisser have written the conclusions.

Short Description and Goals of the Study Trip

Author Bas Cordewener

All higher education institutions in the Netherlands have been (and still are) in the process of implementing learning technologies and integrating them in the teaching and learning process. Many of these institutions are using similar applications. Examples of developments in the Netherlands are the use of electronic learning environments, digital portfolios and streaming video. Other areas of interest are re-usability, standards and metadata.
During the Study Trip in April 2002 we were interested to see how institutions in the UK deal with these issues and what their (organisational, didactical and technical) strategies for implementing learning technologies are.

Another object of interest of the Study Trip was the development of a new group of experts in the field of learning technology. In the UK this group of learning technologists is an established group of professional experts, united in organisations such as ALT and JISC. This development has been observed by Dutch specialists in the field of learning technology. SURF is an organisation similar to JISC, but the Dutch learning technologists are not yet recognised as a professional entity. Also the development and differentiation in Dutch expert and service centres aimed at IT in higher education could be improved. The general feeling however is that sharing experiences with colleagues in the UK would give the specialists in the Netherlands an extra means or instrument to work together.
We wanted to find out how expert services on IT in higher education are organised in the UK, who participates in these organisations, what the goals and outcomes of such an organisation are and how this can be applied to the Dutch situation. Of course there are some interesting findings the Dutch could bring in the discussion, concerning their approach towards innovation of education using IT.

The general goal of the Study Trip was therefore to share experiences in the field of learning technology and to discover similarities and differences between the UK and the Netherlands. More specifically:

1. Learning from interesting organisational, didactical and technical developments with regards to learning technologies as well as sharing experiences between Dutch and UK institutions on how to deal with these issues.
2. Learn about the new roles of learning technologists from the UK and how these expert groups organise themselves.

Themes

Authors Petra Fisser, Wim de Boer en Bas Cordewener

Although participants of the Study Trip were free to choose the sessions they would like to visit, some themes or patterns of related sessions can be identified within this trip. Some major themes were:

1. Teaching and Learning
2. Policy and Planning
3. Staff Development
4. Technology issues related to education

In the next paragraphs we've specified some possible subjects within these themes.

Teaching and Learning
Learning technologies play an important role in teaching and learning. This theme will focus upon the didactical issues concerned with the use of learning technologies in education. Both the teaching and the learning processes are of interest in this theme.
It is interesting to see where higher education in the United Kingdom focuses upon. What learning strategies, pedagogy and flexibility are typical, and how does this work in practice? What are examples of typical best practices, where can we see that e-Learning works?
Another focus could be the development with regards to the new learning environments. We see that learning environments adopt different forms of traditional learning resources (i.e. books), new technology and media resources, as well as the flexible combinations of these types within new educational surroundings.

Policy and Planning
The use of learning technologies usually starts with an enthusiastic teacher who experiments with the possibilities of specific applications. If an institution wants to bring the use of learning technologies to a higher level and to a larger scale of use some policy and/ or planning is needed. This theme focuses on the issue of policy and planning, on strategies to implement and to integrate learning technologies in education, on centralised versus decentralised strategies, on key actors in the process, etc.

Staff Development
This theme focuses upon staff development issues in relation to learning technologies. For learning technologies to be used properly in education, a high standard of support is needed. On one hand this means facilities such as rooms, computers and other equipment, appropriate software, etc. But more importantly it means offering technical support, educational and didactical support and training. For the successful institution-wide implementation of learning technologies these support services, and especially staff development, are needed. Instructors have to learn how to use the new learning technologies. Training and workshops improve the skills of the instructors, but it is also a means of getting them involved in the process of implementing and integrating the technology in teaching and learning.

Technology issues related to education
The technology behind the applications used in education is the fifth theme of this study trip. Issues such as wireless and mobile computing, portals and virtual learning environments, but also standards and metadata will be of specific interest within this theme.

Also addressed in this theme are applications that relate to the possibilities offered by multimedia in education. Examples mentioned are the use of simulations and streaming audio and video.

Conclusions

Authors Wim de Boer, Petra Fisser

In this chapter we will review the trip and see whether it has reached its goals (Section 1.1). Then we will give a summary of our main impressions related to the themes of the trip (Section 1.2). In Section 1. 3 we will conclude with the next steps to be taken.

1.1 The goals of the trip

The general goal of the study trip was to share experiences in the field of learning technology and to discover similarities and differences between the UK and the Netherlands.
We feel that we have seen a lot of very interesting things in the field of ICT and education, covering all areas of organisational, didactical and technical developments. Based on the reports of the Dutch participants, the contacts that have been established (or that will be elaborated upon) and the positive feeling about the trip, we think that we certainly have reached the first goal.
Because of the interactive way the Dutch participants could discuss with the session organisers, there was time to share experiences between Dutch and UK institutions on how to deal with these issues. However, the feeling from the Dutch participants was they still needed more time for discussion sometimes.
During a panel session at the ALT-Conference in Sunderland (September 2002) we discussed these matter. The UK delegates agreed with these comments. We certainly need to find ways to give the participants and theme/ session organisers the time to discuss their topics.
Another goal was to learn about the new roles of learning technologists from the UK and how these expert groups organise themselves. There is still much to learn with regard to this second goal. The Dutch participants were very interested in the way ALT, JISC, LTSN and others are organised. Their influence on a national level in relation to professional development has been an eye-opener. A feasibility study to find out if this is also necessary and possible in the Netherlands could be one of the things to start as an outcome of this study and exchange trip.
We have had a lot of opportunities to learn about the instructors and the learning technologists in the UK. The question is: what can we do with this knowledge in the future? In Section 1.3 we will emphasize a little more on that. In Section 1.2 we will describe the main impressions related to the themes of the trip.

1.2 Impressions from the UK: share experiences and discover similarities and differences

Four main themes were identified to structure the study trip and the sessions with regard to content and context. This helped the participants to select the sessions that would be most appropriate for them. The major themes were:
1. Teaching and learning
2. Policy and planning
3. Staff development
4. Technology issues related to education

Based upon the experiences and reports of the participants, we have described the most apparent conclusions and have given some concluding remarks about the UK exchange trip. We have subdivided these conclusions by the same set of themes again, starting with teaching and learning.

1.2.1 Teaching and learning

Learning technologies play an important role in teaching and learning in both the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The didactical issues concerned with the use of learning technologies in education were a major focus point of the exchange trip. In this regard it was very interesting to see upon which issues the higher education institutions in the United Kingdom focus. We have received information about learning strategies, pedagogical options and possibilities and about different types of flexibility that can be offered within these possibilities and have seen examples of how this works in practice.

Teaching and learning in the UK seems to build upon traditional ways of teaching (as is the case of many universities in the Netherlands). Classroom teaching, face-to-face sessions and working groups are important. ICT is used as a way to make learning more flexible, usually with regard to time and place, but also in on-campus settings. The use of electronic learning environments and other ways of digital communication are the most obvious examples.

Offering flexibility is one thing, but there are still questions about issues, such as: are there ways (or 'best practices') to make learning more flexible, time and place independent, and what tools and pedagogical models are used to accomplish this? The MSc in E-learning, a European collaborative research and development project, was a good example of this, focusing on building learning communities. Another example is something that has gained much interest in the Netherlands as well recently: the use of digital portfolios. Although there are different ways to describe a digital portfolio, in general the idea is that students give an overview of skills and competencies they have gained during their learning process with a strong emphasis on the feedback possibility of both the teacher and the student on the learning process. An interesting example was demonstrated in Glasgow where portfolios are used as personal development plans.

These observations are just some of the interesting issues we have met during the study trip with regard to teaching and learning. It was very interesting to see how technology was used to give students and instructors flexibility in terms of learning and teaching:

- the way the E-learning cafe was set up;
- the way the Open University had set up a digital media centre;
- the way the Sheffield Hallam University's Learning Centre was designed.

Obviously these are very strong and useable ideas that actually work in daily practice.

1.2.2 Policy and planning

An important aspect of E-learning during the exchange trip was that of policy and planning, or more specifically: strategies that are used to implement and integrate learning technologies in education. The Dutch participants were interested in how colleagues in the UK deal with these issues, which strategies they use, whether they prefer centralised or more decentralised strategies and who the key actors in such a process are.

First of all we have learned that some institutions were still in the pioneer stage of implementing learning technologies in education, where others had a clear vision of how E-learning should be implemented in the organisation. Again, this is similar to the situation in the Netherlands, where we notice that the same stages of implementation occur.

The way policy has been developed - support units are created, supporting staff are appointed etc. - can be linked to the stage an institution is in. In the pioneer stage there are enthusiastic teachers that use some form of learning technology in their education, usually a website or a virtual learning environment. In this stage policy is not (yet) an issue. Support is at hand, but on a voluntary basis, often colleagues helping each other.

After this stage a number of people are officially appointed for educational and technical support. These people are situated in departments, schools or in a central support unit. At this stage policy issues are being discussed with regard to infrastructure and a vision about learning with technologies. Pilot projects are initiated.

These pilot projects lead to the next stage in which the organisation recognises the need for structural support in both the technical aspects as well as in the didactical support. Many institutions are in this stage now. Full integration of learning technologies in education however is still something that lies in the future for both Dutch and British institutions.

An interesting initiative on a broader scale is the eUniversity in the UK, comparable with the Digital University in the Netherlands. Three masters have already been developed in the UK variant, which will be available by January 2003. The Dutch counterpart is more focussing on the development of a digital portfolio, creating online materials for parts of study programmes and on the professional development of management, teachers and support staff. Both initiatives have implications for the way learning technologies are used in the individual institutions, again particularly related to flexibility in time and place.
Finally we want to mention the Open University's approach in this respect. Considering their student population they have to focus on the individual learner and how to support this learner with technology. All courses are developed by course production teams (academic specialists, graphic designers, multimedia producers, educational technologists, librarians, etc) an approach that is not common for regular universities. This implies also that more emphasis is on the Return on Investment and reuse of materials. Traditional universities in the Netherlands, as well as in the UK can learn from these approaches as they try to reach new student markets.

1.2.3 Staff development

Staff development issues have a strong relationship to the first two themes. In both the Netherlands and the UK staff development is not only related to learning technologies, but is also often combined with educational change processes. For learning technologies to be properly used in education, a high standard of support is needed. Issues related to facilities such as rooms, computers and other equipment, appropriate software, technical support, educational and didactical support and training were subject for those sessions that emphasized on this theme.
As in the Netherlands, staff development was highlighted as a major issue in the UK as well. Each of the host institutions had its own staff development support group or program which focussed not only upon the IT skills needed for using learning technology, but on the underpinning pedagogical issues as well. Although these programs are designed principally for academic staff, in our exchange trip some interesting examples of how support staff could also benefit from staff development were highlighted.
Most institutions in the Netherlands provide staff development in ICT for learning and teaching, national training for support staff however has only recently become a major topic within the Dutch higher education system, for example with the establishment of a SURF 'train the trainer' programme last year. It would be interesting to see if some of the approaches to staff development advocated by the LTSN generic centre and the other UK institutions could be implemented within Dutch institutions.
Another major topic of interest was the development of learning technology expert groups in the UK. Within the UK, collaboration amongst learning technologists is promoted through national organisations, such as ALT and LTSN. Although Dutch learning technologists have been aware for some time of the growth of these organisations, no similar organisations exist in the Netherlands. Our discussions with JISC, LTSN and ALT have led us to believe that the establishment of similar Dutch organisations would provide new channels for collaboration across institutions. SURF is considered as the organisation that has the closest resemblance to such an organisation, but is still different from the UK organisations: it does not provide opportunities for individual membership and supports only institutional membership, for example. A major question resulting from our study trip was whether SURF should establish similar organisations supporting learning technologists in the Netherlands. This could be a topic for discussion during forthcoming SURF meetings.

1.2.4 Technology issues related to education

The technology behind the applications used in education was another important theme of this study trip. Issues such as wireless and mobile computing, portals and electronic learning environments, but also standards and metadata were of specific interest within this theme.

Portals are a big issue in both countries. Many universities are looking for ways to present their information in a structured way, accessible for different kinds of persons with specific needs and requirements. The general idea is that the information that is presented can be tailored to the needs of the kind of visitor (usually students, staff and visitors). Presenting information is not the only idea behind a portal. Combining and connecting different systems with each other (student registration, grades, assessment, etc.) could make it much more easier for the end-user to find the appropriate information without having to deal with problems such as looking into different systems and logging in several times per day.
Another big issue is standardisation. Standards become more important each day. It was very interesting to see how the UK deals with these standards. Interesting groups, such as the CETIS Educational Content Special Interest Group, focus on learning technology standards. Specifications make sure that (educational) content can be reused. By facilitating interoperability content can be shared between systems. This ensures that educational content is accessible to all users.
Most people agree that education is more important than the technology behind it. However, the availability of the technology, the infrastructure and the many ways the technology can be used, are still important issues to discuss while thinking about using learning technologies in education.

1.3 The future

The Dutch group has learned about the expert groups of learning technologists. In the panel session at the ALT-Conference in Sunderland (September 2002) some suggestions for setting up or intensifying professional contacts with colleagues were made:

- Possible (informal) twinning, at institutional level or by individuals
- Databases of expertise, experience (link with existing databases such as TechLearn, Netculture, etc.)
- Possible exchange of staff development courses and materials online discussions or shared projects

SURF already has ideas and plans, i.e. is talking with ALT about intensifying contacts and there are plans to use each other's materials with LSTN.

Very important are the plans about a return trip from our UK colleagues to the Netherlands next year. We have discussed this also in the panel session at the ALT-Conference. Some ideas:

- A general introduction is very much appreciated
- Fewer topics: two or three topics of particular interest
- Fewer sites (plan a rolling programme of sites to visit)
- SIGS (special interest groups) for the topics and/or sites

In conclusion we can only say that the study trip to the UK was an enormous success and we hope to make the return trip as interesting and motivating for our colleagues from the UK!

Summary

London

ALT and e-Learning in the UK (page 17)

The Learning Technology Research Institute (LTRI) and the Association for Learning Technology (ALT) are two organisations within the UK that focus on ICT in the field of learning and teaching. LTRI has been founded in 2000. It is a university wide research institute that conducts theoretical and applied research into the use of ICT to promote, transform and augment learning. It has over the 20 members with 5 full time researchers.
ALT is an educational organisation, which wants to bring together all those with an interest in the use of learning technology in higher and further education. Currently ALT has 130 corporate and 570 individual members and these numbers are still growing. It has several partners and collaborates with organisations like SURF, ASCILITE, LTSN, ILT, and TechDis.

Introducing Learning Technology into the Curriculum (page 19)

Goldsmiths College (www.goldsmiths.ac.uk) is part of the University of London and offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes on mainly creative, cultural and social subjects. One year ago the institute started with CELT (Centre of Learning Technology). With the establishment of CELT the institute aimed at supporting the academic staff in using new technologies for learning and teaching. The Dutch visitors were presented some projects concerning laboratory software, languages, dyslexic students, intranet and First Class in learning practice.
Goldsmith College has only recently begun but a lot has been achieved so far. – misschien niet over de sessie zelf, maar meer over de uitkomsten, wat hebben we geleed, ed.

E-Learning at the Open University (page 21)

The Open University with its 185.000 students is the largest university in the UK. The university is 100% aimed at distance learning. Therefore web support is even more important than at traditional universities. The support is targeted towards the student's aims in three different stages: from initial enquiry to enrolment, becoming a student, on course / on programme.
Very important is the reuse of learning materials in standard formats with metadata. By now, everything produced in the last three years is reusable. Materials can also be bought, reused and adapted by others. The website of the OU Library is called the OpenLibr@ry. It contains a web-based catalogue, a wide range of electronic resources and learner support services. There's a project for mobile Internet users and a MyOpen Library project. The OPAL project aims at deploying electronic agents for answering questions by students on using the library website.

Glasgow

Researching Online Learning and Assessing in Scotland (page 24)

SCROLLA is the Scottish centre for research into online learning and assessment. The Glasgow strand focuses particularly on networked learning environments and their communities of use and issues of pedagogy, teaching development and learning support within them.
Dr. Harris' research concentrates on the characteristics of online communication. It codes for co-constructions of knowledge, with the aim of potentially helping tutors with assessment of discussions. For coding and analysis she uses Nvivo, a software package for cognitive analysis. The coding of dialogues is done by hand, but once the information is electronic, comparisons can be made. The target is to look for patterns in discussions with the idea that different sorts of interaction arise in different sorts of discussion groups. Once these patterns are found, one might be able to translate these into scorable participation profiles.

Vocational Education and Staff Development (page 26)

Joe Wilson presented an overview of the use of Learning Technology (LT) in Scottish Further Education (SFE). FE is comparable with the broad range of education activities in Dutch ROC's (Regionale Opleidings Centra). There seems to be more cooperation organised between FE and HE than is the case in the Netherlands between MBO (ROC's) and HBO (Universities of Higher Vocational Education). Staff development was a key issue in the discussion.

Interoperability: Tools and Specifications (page 27)

CETIS is the Centre for Education Technology Interoperability Standards. It advises Universities and Colleges on the strategic, technical and pedagogic implications of educational technology standards. There are a number of Special Interest Groups (SIG's), in some of which Dutch people participate.
Standards make sure that (educational) content can be reused and be shared. They enable users to locate appropriate content, plan educational scenarios and deliver educational content tailored to learners' requirements. Standardisation is not only about metadata specifications. The human side of using metadata is much more complicated. A course developer won't fill in a 4-page form to code each of his learning objects. A lecturer might be reluctant to share his courses.

Strategy and Planning for e-Learning (page 29)

The Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) context is built upon a general (strategic) vision with three keywords: innovative, inclusive, responsive. Parts of the GCU context are two strategic themes: strengthen the core, develop the difference. Therefore there are core and difference related projects.
'Core' projects: recabling the campus; new SRS and HR; firewall implementation; new student e-mail facility; university wide help desk.
'Difference' projects: Elisu, APU, CITTU; Blackboard; Learning Café; Real@Caledonean; Staff and student portal; Apple I-Student; Compaq 'Learning on the move'.

Learning Café and ELISU (page 31)

Caledonian University in Glasgow has good experiences with its new Learning Café . The success of the Learning Cafe can be explained by a citation of the designer, Les Watson, Pro Vice Principal, Learning Services and Learning Café: 'A social learning space supported by technology but not dominated by it'.
The e-learning Innovation Support Unit (Elisu) has been established to support the University objectives for online and life-long learning. It offers expertise in the design, development and implementation of e-Learning to academic staff across the faculties. The development results are saved in a personal portfolio of each staff member.

Teaching and Learning with Blackboard (page 33)

This session described the Glasgow Caledonian University's experience of implementing Blackboard within de Caledonian Business school, and provided an overview of the outcome, both pedagogical en technical. Gillian Robbert described the implementation of blackboard for their courses. Noreen Sioddique talked about her experience with the use of discussion groups in Blackboard. Ron Livingstone spoke about his experience with Blackboard for part-time, post-graduate students (MBA programme).

Strategic Overview of ICT in Teaching and Learning (page 34)

In forming an information strategy, the University of Strathclyde decided to make a division into eight information components. Strathclyde's information strategy requires breaking down the traditional division between faculties, IT-department and library and appointing a director of information resources.
The strategies formed on the eight components include: developing teaching materials; set-up of a digital library; standards and copyright issues; set-up of a Gigabit backbone and laptops for all students.
Since Quality Assurance - institutionalised in the Quality Assurance Agency or QAA (www.qaa.ac.uk) - became a major concern at UK universities in the nineties, centralization has become an issue. For a university, measuring up to the standards of the QAA is very important, since a bad remark can seriously harm an institution. Innovations always bring a certain risk of failure with them. Therefore, a new process is start off, in which a check on quality assurance is complemented by a check on quality enhancement.

Millennium Laptop Project (page 36)

At Strathclyde University, the millennium laptop project was established, to introduce laptops as an innovative support for the use of ICT within academic programmes and administration. The use of mobile computing is introduced because of the many possibilities of working with laptops. The students have the opportunity to access to learning resources and student services anytime and anywhere they like. During the pilot in 2001 – 2002, 550 students participated in the laptop-project with one special classroom and radio transmitting with connections in the library.

Virtual Communities for Problem-based Learning (page 38)

In this one-hour session Neil Ballantyne and Bob Munro of the University of Strathclyde introduced two virtual communities for problem-based learning. Ballantyne from the Department of Social Work introduced the course 'Family and Lifespan development'. In

this problem based virtual community students work collaboratively in small groups to make an assessment of the problems at hand in the case study.
Munro presented a national initiative for developing a virtual community for learning schoolteachers how to use ICT in their education. The virtual community focuses on the pedagogical possibilities of ICT in schools.
It was thought that the quality of the work presented was very high and for this topic non-existing at this level in The Netherlands. Possibilities for use and transfer to the Dutch situation will be investigated.

Supporting Students Personal Development Planning (page 42)

In the UK, progress files are kept for all individual students. Personal Development Planning (PDP) can be compared with Portfolio's, which also are becoming more popular in Dutch Higher Education. From the introduction and usage of PDP by a network of pioneers, PDP is now on top of the agenda in Scotland; the rest of the UK is following as well. Personal tutors, advisors of studies and careers advisory services organize student support for PDP. However, this is not well handled yet: no proper staff development for PDP tutoring is available. The relationship with employers is very important at Strathclyde University; this is an important factor for PDP success.
Dutch and UK PDP developers and researchers will benefit from further collaboration and exchange. Therefore, further contact on this issue, between institutions and at SURF/ALT level, is highly recommended.

Sheffield

Activity Based Costing (page 45)

Sarah Heginbotham of Sheffield Hallam University told about Activity Based Costing. ABC is used to assign all costs within an organisation to specific activities. Especially in e-Learning one assumes that there are many hidden costs, that could be clarified this way. The project concerning ABC was started to familiarise with the phenomenon and conduct a pilot study. The project was founded by JISC.

Wireless and Mobility Issues (page 47)

From the European structural fund two Universities (Hallam & University of Sheffield) became € 1.000.000 with a view to pilot a seamless wireless network at near large nodes of learning and to set up a test bed for research on wireless networks (MAN's = Metropolitan Area Network). Paul Bacsich was involved in this project as a project director.

UK perspectives and Initiatives in ICT (page 49)

TeachLearn supports a co-ordinated approach to the use of innovative technologies in learning and teaching across UK Further and Higher Education.
TechDis is an ICT advice and support service to enhance access for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to learning, teaching, research and administration.
The *LTSN* is a network of 24 subject centres based in higher education institutions throughout the UK. It aims to promote high quality learning and teaching through the development and transfer of good practice in all subject disciplines.

Tom Franklin and Kathy Wiles talked about issues regarding *the implementation of VLE's* and e-learning.
The *ILT* is a members based organisation for all who teach and support learning in higher education in the UK.

The UK eUniversity (page 51)

The UK eUniversity aims at being an e-Learning vehicle for all UK universities. Its ambition since it has started in 2000 has been to gain a considerable share in the big market for e-Learning for English-speaking students at university level, and to meet the need for more e-Learning delivery in the UK. The government has put up 100 million euros, thereby also hoping to encourage public-private partnership.
UKeU courses are delivered primarily by electronic means. The UKeU has build its own platform for delivery, which contains both a learning management system (LMS) and a learning administration system (LAS).

Staff Development for Technical Skills (page 52)

Hallam University made a development plan for its technical staff to outline shortages, establish appropriate training, review available training and evaluate. Most courses were IT-related: Basic IT skills, Dos, MS Office. Other courses: Time management, Presentation skills, etc. Staff members were motivated by promotion possibilities. After the training, people performed better and became more self-confident.

The MSc in e-Learning (page 54)

The background context is the MSc programme in e-Learning, Multimedia and Consultancy that was developed from the TRIPLE M Advanced Curriculum Development (CDA) Project supported by the European Commission under the SOCRATES programme (1998-2001). This is one of several recent projects to arise from the activities of the Thematic Network for Teacher Education in Europe (TNTEE). The programme has involved an active partnership between Arnhem-Nijmegen University of Higher Vocational Education in the Netherlands, the University of Oulu in Finland and Sheffield Hallam University in the UK. The team based the programme on three foundation units: Learner - Culture - Technology.
At the start of the course the communication, in different ways, got full attention. Face-to-face communication was available (video conferencing) and used. To work in international teams, students had to recognise and overcome cultural and language differences.

Implementing ICT Strategy (page 57)

The Learning Media Unit's main role is to provide support to individual staff and their departments when introducing C&IT into teaching. The university selected WebCT as their VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) in November 1998. There is no pressure to use the VLE; it was facilitated. They started with three projects that received considerable funding. One of the goals was to find the strengths and weaknesses of WebCT. The first users were mainly power-users. Novice users often don't really know what to do with the VLE. The Learning Media Unit helps them to 'translate' their existing course into a course that uses the VLE.

Student Portals (page 58)

The Learning & Teaching Institute of Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) is a university wide institute. It focuses on IT technical skills and learning and teaching. The presentations mainly focused on web strategy. It is important to avoid so-called portal wars about the question of ownership. A portal is a web interface; accessible by browser (uncomplicated software); a personalised environment; providing data relevant to individual and adaptive (intelligence). The student portal mainly exists of the virtual learning environment (Blackboard) and the student Intranet. Partly due to a new law about accessibility that will be ratified later this year accessibility is an important issue. Universities should have a proactive policy to meet the needs of those who are disabled (blindness, dyslexics, etc.).

The Learning Centre (page 60)

Graham Bulpitt, the director of the Learning Centre (LC) of the Sheffield Hallam University, talked about the centre. It accommodates library and information services, computing facilities, a professional media studio, study facilities (for groups and individual students), a learning and teaching institute and a learning and teaching research institute.
Graham summarized the development as a change from structures to what students need. Each staff member has a core competence. For the tutors it has provided a better awareness of student expectations, a boost in participation in staff development programs and finally the introduction of Blackboard.
For faculty staff the LC is often too far from their working environments. This has proved to be a barrier.

Conclusions

The general goal of the study trip was to share experiences in the field of learning technology and to discover similarities and differences between the UK and the Netherlands.
We have seen a lot of very interesting things in the field of ICT and education, covering all areas of organisational, didactical and technical developments. Based on the reports of the Dutch participants, the contacts that have been established (or that will be elaborated upon) and the positive feeling about the trip, we think that we certainly have reached our goal.
Because of the interactive way the Dutch participants could discuss with the session organisers, there was time to share experiences between Dutch and UK institutions on how to deal with these issues. However, the feeling from the Dutch participants was they still needed more time for discussion sometimes.

Very important are the plans about a return trip from our UK colleagues to the Netherlands next year.

In conclusion we can only say that the study trip to the UK was an enormous success and we hope to make the return trip as interesting and motivating for our colleagues from the UK!

London

ALT and e-Learning in the UK

Author Micha van Wijngaarden, SURF Educatie<F>, Pierre Gorissen, Fontys Hogescholen

Contact: Tom Boyle, Director Learning Technology Research Institute, t.boyle@unl.ac.uk, Rhonda Riachi, Director, ALT, alt@brookes.ac.uk, Peter Murray, Executive Secretary, ALT, alt.execsec@btopenworld.com

Theme: Policy and Planning, Teaching and Learning, Staff Development

Summary

The Learning Technology Research Institute (LTRI) and the Association for Learning Technology (ALT) are two organisations within the UK that focus on ICT in the field of learning and teaching.

Learning Technology Research Institute

Tom Boyle gave a short overview of LTRI, which was founded in 2000. It is a university wide research institute that conducts theoretical and applied research into the use of ICT to promote, transform and augment learning. It has over the 20 members with 5 full time researchers.
The institute focus on three main themes where it is doing several projects:
1. Multimedia learning environments like educational multimedia games, virtual classrooms and multimedia design.
2. Dialogue, communication and virtual communities
3. Websites and online communities with international partners.
4. Theory for creation and re-use in e-Learning
5. Journals with discussion material; UK theory group (JIME).
6. Pedagogically informed base for learning object portability and re-use.

One of the other activities of LTRI is to provide pedagogical leadership for the new LTSN National Subject Centre for the Information and Computer Sciences. For more details about these subject centres see report of 'UK perspectives & initiatives in ICT' or the website www.ics.ltsn.ac.uk.

Association of Learning Technology

ALT is an educational organisation, which wants to bring together all those with an interest in the use of learning technology in higher and further education.
To achieve this, it:
1. publishes a journal, newsletter, website and occasional publications;
2. organises a big conference, workshops, focus groups on individual products (hosted by the manufacturer), special interest groups and regional meetings around the UK.

Currently ALT has 130 corporate and 570 individual members and these numbers are still growing. It has several partners and collaborates with organisations like SURF, ASCILITE, LTSN, ILT, and TechDis

Within the UK there is a quite similar history of the developing of ICT in Higher and Further Education. The government stimulates to exploit the technologies in order to save money and make teaching processes more efficient (teach more students).

Results are programmes such as:
- Computers in Teaching Initiative (been and gone)
- Teaching and Learning Technology Programme (3 phases - now finished)
- Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (still going)

Current learning technology initiatives are:
- Learning and Teaching Subject Network (LTSN) - not technology driven
- JISC Resource Discovery Network (RDN) and Distributed National Electronic Resource (DNER) - portals and hubs
- National Grid for Learning (NGfL) and National Learning Network (NLN) - materials for schools and further education

The nature of teaching and learning has changed. Virtual and managed learning environments are widely implemented. The universities are now catering for different learning modes and styles: fewer lectures at universities, but more discussion forums and chat rooms. The expectations of the student are growing (e.g. Brookes HallNet, more PC labs, access from home).
Expectations for the future are:
- finances growing tighter;
- strategic alliances and mergers of universities and FE colleges to capture wider market of increasingly diverse learners;
- quality versus quantity;
- choice: time, place and combinations of study modules;
- less face-to-face contact.

Websites:
- National Grid for Learning: www.dfee.gov.uk/grid
- National Learning Network: www.nln.ac.uk
- Learning and Teaching Subject Network: www.ltsn.ac.uk
- JISC Resource Discovery network: rdn.ac.uk
- Distributed National Electronic Resource: jisc.ac.uk/dner
- ALT: www.alt.ac.uk
- SURF: www.surf.nl
- ASCILITE: www.ascilite.org.au
- Institute for Learning and Teaching in HE: www.ilt.ac.uk
- TechDis: www.techdis.ac.uk
- Learning Technology Research Institute: www.unl.ac.uk/ltri
- Journal of Interactive Media in Education: www-jime.open.ac.uk
- Teaching and Learning Technology Programme: www.ncteam.ac.uk/projects/tltp
- Fund for the Dev. of Teaching and Learning: www.ncteam.ac.uk/projects/fdtl/index.htm

Introducing Learning Technology into the Curriculum

Authors Petra Wentzel, Vrije Universiteit, Gerda Schaaf, Hanzehogeschool Groningen

Contact: John Phelps, Goldsmiths College, Learning and Teaching Technology Officer, j.phelps@gold.ac.uk.

Theme: Teaching and learning, staff development

Summary

We were welcomed at Goldsmiths College by the Pro Warden Mrs. Kay Harper. Goldsmiths College (www.goldsmiths.ac.uk) is part of the University of London and offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes on mainly creative, cultural and social subjects. Examples are: Arts (textiles, pottery, drama), Social Studies and History.

A New Learning Strategy
Goldsmiths College has recently shifted its teaching methodology towards a more learner centred learning strategy. Using technology for this approach thus far was a problem, because of an insufficient technical infrastructure and a lack of means of supporting academic staff. Also, some programmes seemed unsuitable for technology use, for example what to do digital when you are teaching pottery? It was felt that the Goldsmiths College was getting behind. Combined with an increased competition by e-universities and distance institutions, 3 years ago Goldsmiths College decided to do something. Therefore Mrs. Joan Cateman was appointed to start the development of this project and one year ago Mr. John Phelps was appointed to further develop and maintain the infrastructure needed. Goals were set on independent learning, improved quality, a networked environment and embedded use of technology in teaching practice.

After this short introduction six presenters gave an impression of their projects and work as a CELT-Fellow. Here you find short descriptions of their presentations. More information can be found in the sheets and on the corresponding websites (see below).

Centre of Learning Technology
John Phelps is the Learning and Teaching Technology Officer of CELT (Centre of Learning Technology). With the establishment of CELT one year ago Goldsmiths aimed at supporting the academic staff in using new technologies for learning and teaching. In practice this means the development of peer support and a fellowship scheme, organising seminars and workshops, supporting pedagogic research, creating a safe environment for experiments, encouraging dissemination within departments, an annual innovation and teaching event and a 'drop-in' area for obtaining support. As a result of this approach each department now has a person responsible for the computer network, 6 fellows are assisted this year and 16 next year (out of 300 fulltime staff members), a peer support network is functioning, 3 departments have adopted an approach to web based learning, the use of a VLE is discussed, a pilot web based assessment system and video streaming service are used. The general feeling is that academic staff has improved on their knowledge of learning and teaching technologies and they are using these skills more often. A further change of mind is taking place; the benefits of staff development in learning and teaching are recognised.

First Class in Teaching Practice
Diane Davies uses First Class as a VLE for students who are at teaching practice in secondary schools. The Internet is used as a communication tool to support groups and tutors, to give information on vacancies and how to write application letters, as a help site where students can help each other, as an entrance point to each others knowledgebase, as a

base for exchanging good practice and as an information source on courses and study-schemes for secondary schools with goals etc. Diane tries to make the websites as self-sufficient as possible and believes that students are not behind on C&IT-skills, but the staff is. In the JISC-project on subject-based portals the question is asked how to use all the material on the Internet. It is no longer the question whether material can be found, but is it valuable or not?

Dyslexic
Karen Nicholls uses websites for preparatory and support courses in English. Karen is busy making a website for self study for first- and second language students and dyslexic students. She found one lecturer who was enthusiastic in cooperating. Her lecture was filmed and that video was used as the basis for several exercises for students. The website has different exercises: students must fill in gaps, answer questions about the video and finally make a summary. She hopes to find more lecturers interested in cooperating so students can practise English in their own subject.

Eprime in Laboratory Classes
Edmund Keogh uses Eprime, a software package that allows researchers and students to build experiments in the first and second year laboratory classes on the BSc Psychology course. The software is very easy to use and statistics can be exported into SPSS. Students are very enthusiastic about this software and are able to use it quickly and efficiently. Edmund supported his colleagues and found that the staff members have more difficulty in using the program than the students. Other problems are mainly linked with technical support.

Intranet
Graham held a short presentation on Goldsmiths Partnership Intranet. He also uses First Class to make all kind of material easy available concerning Learning and Teaching, Administration and Research, for example handbooks, course information, forms, abstracts of departmental research, conferences etc.

Languages
Jane Baker works at the languages resource centre and her project for CELT was to convert past multi-skill exams into an accessible web format and include video & audio clips as well as transcriptions and answers. She will do this for 4 languages with exams from all levels. These websites can be used for students as self-study material.
Eventually she will teach LRC staff how to make the pages by use of a template.

Conclusion

The session was well prepared but with all the presentations there was regrettably little or no time to discuss, only some questions were asked. Goldsmith College has only recently begun but a lot has been achieved so far.

e-Learning at the Open University

Author Gerdien Jansen, Vrije Universiteit, Judith Schoonenboom, Vrije Universiteit

Contact: Peter Wilson, Open University, P.D.Wilson@open.ac.uk

Theme: Teaching and learning and technology issues related to education

Summary

Overview of the Open University
Dominic Newbould, Visitor and Community Relations Manager, OU Communications

The Open University with its 185.000 students is the largest university in the UK. The university is 100% aimed at distance learning. The OU employs more than 1000 academic staff, 8000 part-time associate lecturers, 13 regional centres and over 350 UK study centres. The OU combines teaching, student support, research and the production of study materials.

The OU is Open to Time by enabling students to study at their own pace. 70 % of OU students are in employment and the logs show that the majority of logins to the OU occur between 6 and 12 PM.

The OU is Open to People and aims at widening participation in higher education. For studying at the OU usually no entry qualifications are required, and in fact 40 % of OU students do not have the qualifications that would traditionally be required for university entrance.7,600 disabled students study at the OU. The OU has a high population of female students. The majority of the OU students are aged between their late 20s and 40s, but the fastest growing group is students in their early 20s.

The OU is Open to Places by making available its courses UK-wide and internationally. All registered students have access to a local tutor, who works at one of the over 350 UK study centres. Each course has a fixed start and end date, which opens up the possibility of group work. The OU encourages students to form self-help groups.

The OU offers a variety of degrees ranging from pre-degree courses to masters and research degrees. Each course has a workload of a quarter or a half-year's work. Each course comes with a wide range of study materials and methods, such as study guides, workbooks, software, face-to-face tutorials, on-line support, TV or radio broadcasts, CD-ROMs, workshops etc. Assessment consists typically of continuous assessment (tutor-marked assignments; 50 %) and 50 % end-of-course examination.

The OU is a professional and innovative university. At the OU, innovations are carried out in teaching methods and media, new curriculum, instructional design and use of media. All courses are developed by course production teams, which consist of academic specialists, graphic designers, multimedia producers, educational technologists, librarians etc.

The OU approach has been very successful. About 80% of finally registered undergraduates pass their first-year examinations. 2 million students have studied at least one course with the OU since 1971 and 300.000 have graduated with degrees at the OU. The OU ranks in the top ten UK universities on teaching quality ratings.

Student Services Online
Marion Phillips, Assistant Director, Student Services Planning Office (NTSS)

With a distance learning institution like the OU, (web) support is even more important than at traditional universities. This applies both to students and to associated lecturers, who also operate at a distance. Support for associated lecturers has just started. Generally, the OU support services integrate information with advice and guidance, and support is tailored to the individual student and the curriculum.

The support is targeted towards the student's aims in three different stages:
- Stage 1: from initial enquiry to enrolment, in which the student has to make an informed choice about the decision to study, the selection of courses and the programme of study. Two main sites in supporting this choice are the Courses website and the Learners Guide to Course Choice, which asks the prospective students questions about study aim and previous degrees.
- Stage 2: becoming a student, in which the learner has to develop learning and studentship skills for successful transition into higher education. Since at the OU, students follow many different pathways through the courses, student skill development has to be programmed alongside the courses. Two main sites are the Preparation for study and the Learning skills. The SAFARI (Skills in Accessing, Finding, and Reviewing Information) website provides an online course on information skills.
- Stage 3: on course / on programme. In stage 3, personal support is delivered through all possible means, such as e-mail and bulletin boards. Because there is a lot of e-mail traffic, the OU is currently implementing e-mail handling software. For 11 pilot courses, a course Induction site is now ready, which gives the student both course-related and general information about studying with the OU (study tips, who is who etc.) Students also have their own homepage and personal electronic records. The OU is planning at setting up tools for creating a Personal Development Plan and a Qualifications Planner

Public support web sites can be reached at and through:
- Learners Guide: www.open.ac.uk/learners-guide
- Safari: www.open.ac.uk/safari
- Students: www.open.ac.uk/students
- Learning: www.open.ac.uk/learning

Reuse and reversioning
John Feltham, Head of production systems, Learning and teaching solutions

In his presentation, John Feltham discussed some aspects of reuse of digital materials, including the use of different media, modularisation, copyright and quality control. Now that most study materials can be delivered through a range of different media (for example print, web and e-books), costs will escalate, unless the OU can ensure a standardized input, which enables a flexible output to the different media types. At the OU, there are two standards for input: a structured Word template, which at the end is converted to XML, is used predominantly for print output; XMetal is used predominantly for web output. With respect to output, all print materials are sent to the printer in PDF format. PDF files are saved in both high and low quality format.

Reuse implies modularisation of materials. At the moment, metadata are attached to chapters. In the future metadata will be attached to learning objects. Each graphic has its own persistent identifier, a sort of ISBN for graphics. The metadata comply with standards like IMS, the Dublin core etc. Metadata tags are put in by support staff, not by the academics who write the content.

Each graphic, and in the future each building block, must go through a procedure of clearing the rights, which is carried out by the OU copyright centre. The clearing process is built into the workflow system, so that a caption 'rights have not been cleared' is attached to a graphic, as long as the clearing process has not been settled. Attaching copyright information to a graphic and putting the graphics into an archive, enables authors e.g. to look for the cheapest graphic on a particular subject.

Another important issue at the OU, like any university in the UK, is quality control. Since reaching top quality is too expensive (the 80/20 rule), the OU strives for good quality.

By now, everything produced in the last three years is reusable. Materials can also be bought, reused and adapted by others, e.g. by the SURF members! Adaptation is allowed, as long as it is done in a professional way.

Online services at the Open Libr@ry
Anne Ramsden, IT projects manager, Library services

The website of the OU Library is called the OpenLibr@ry. It contains a web-based catalogue, a wide range of electronic resources and learner support services. For searching and browsing the library database, either at the OU or outside, the Voyager online catalogue is used. About 2500 quality Internet resources, meant for use in 140 OU courses, are collected in the OU ROUTES database. By now, courses begin to embed ROUTES in their electronic learning environment. Information literacy skills can be learned in the open online web guide SAFARI (Skills in Accessing, Finding & Retrieving Information; www.open.ac.uk/safari) or through the online course MOSAIC (Making Sense of Information in the Connected Age).

At the moment, three innovative projects are running at the Open Library. The Library service for mobile Internet users project aims at delivering library information through PDA's and mobile WAP phones. The MyOpen Library project is in its early stage. Aim of this project is to provide students with tools with which they can create their own suite of resources, saved searches, alerts, bookmarks etc.

The OPAL (online personal academic librarian) project aims at deploying electronic agents for answering questions by students on using the library website. This project was started after research had shown that of the questions that students asked, 70 % of the answers were available on the web, 60 % were routine questions and 60 % were asked outside office hours. The agents will provide students 7*24 hours with canned answers, and they will push web pages. The agents will also invite students lingering around to help them, an option that in a pilot study turned out to be much appreciated by the students.

The Open Library maintains national and international research partnerships, among others with the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya in Spain. The URL of the OU OpenLibr@ry: www.open.ac.uk/library.

Glasgow

Researching Online Learning and Assessing in Scotland

Author Hans Bronkhorst, Wageningen Universiteit, Josette Donnison, Universiteit van Amsterdam

A focus on networked learning, policy and change, and assessment

Contact: Dr. Rachel Harris, SCROLLA, University of Glasgow

Theme: Teaching and learning

Summary

The session was divided into three parts:
1. an introduction of SCROLLA and specifically the work of dr. Harris
2. short presentation of each participant to the session
3. exchange of views and research topics between the UK and Dutch participants.

SCROLLA, the Scottish centre for research into online learning and assessment, is funded under the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council's Research Development Grant, until August 2004. The centre provides a focus for multidisciplinary, multi-sector research into the use of Information and Communication Technologies in education. The main aim of the centre is to support educational research across Scotland, and from Scotland across the UK and beyond. The research within SCROLLA ranges from developmental to theoretical research, touching upon applied research when possible or necessary.
The Edinburgh strand focuses on policy and change issues surrounding the educational use of ICT and online learning, from local and global perspectives.
The Heriot Watt strand focuses on assessment, supported by ICT and bases in considerable experience in the development, evaluation an implementation of CAA resources in school and post-compulsory education. The Glasgow strand focuses particularly on networked learning environments and their communities of use and issues of pedagogy, teaching development and learning support within them.
Dr. Harris (mail: r.harris@udcf.gla.as.uk) is research fellow within this last strand. Her research concentrates on the characteristics of online communication. It uses the theoretical grounding of Lally, Tolmic and McAteer. It codes for co-constructions of knowledge, with the aim of potentially helping tutors with assessment of discussions. Distinction is made in several categories, for example facilitation, organisation, divergence and convergence. For coding and analysis she uses Nvivo, a software package for cognitive analysis. The coding of dialogues is done by hand, which is time-consuming, but once the information is electronic, comparisons can be made. The target is to look for patterns in discussions with the idea that different sorts of interaction arise in different sorts of discussion groups. Once these patterns are found, one might be able to translate these into scorable participation profiles.

Discussion

About online communities some people advocated that regularly meetings were necessary, preferably starting with a physical meeting first. ‘Competing ways’ is not necessarily a good way to go. Straight comparisons are not possible. Others said that face-to-face (i.e. physical) meetings were not necessary, because the online part would become less

important. With partners on a broader scale, for instance European, it seems that an initial 'live' meeting of participants enhances the interaction online at a later state.
One more aspect was mentioned: one cannot just put the results of an online discussion open for everybody on the web, nor cite from it at liberty. Aspects of intellectual property arise and should be tackled accordingly.

Website: www.scrolla.ac.uk

Vocational Education and Staff Development

Author Hans Outhuis, Saxion Hogescholen

Contact: Joe Wilson, Project Officer Scottish Further Education Unit (Joe.Wilson@sfeu.ac.uk)

Theme: Staff development

Summary

Joe presented an overview of the use of Learning Technology (LT) in Scottish Further Education (SFE). FE is comparable with the broad range of education activities in Dutch ROC's (Regionale Opleidings Centra). There seems to be more cooperation organised between FE and HE than is the case in the Netherlands between MBO (ROC's) and HBO (Universities of Higher Vocational Education)
Key organisations in Scottish further education:
- SEELLD; Scottish Executive Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (sets national education policy)
- Funding policy: www.sfc.ac.uk
- Curriculum for FE: www.sqa.org.uk
- LTScotland: www.ltscotland.org.uk
- SFEU: www.sfeu.ac.uk
- JISC: www.jisc.ac.uk

ICT Issues in SFE:
- Infrastructure
- Support
- Teaching and learning - Staff development
- Deal with Cisco, Novell, Microsoft. They provide training at low costs. Shortage of IT-staff could be compensated by employing students.
- National training needs survey
- Virtual Learning Centre funded with European money (SFEU website, VLC)
- Websites mapped on elements of the curriculum for example: performance criteria levels. Statistics show they are much used.
- Standards
- ECDL for basic skills
- FENTO competence framework for staff development (www.fento.org.uk)

FE is prescriptive for staff qualifications

Discussion

How to get staff (other than early adopters) to use Learning technology?
Some examples were given:
-Learner Guide; instructions to use LT for staff on topics they are interested in (Income tax)
-Webwise; a BBC television programme; ICT does change your life style. Programmes like these should be used more to influence staff. But managers are afraid of ‘misuse’ of Internet.

Interoperability: Tools and Specifications

Author Michiel van Geloven, SURF Educatie<F>, Pierre Gorissen, Fontys Hogescholen

Contact: Lorna Campbell (lmc@strath.ac.uk), Boon Low (boon.low@strath.ac.uk)

Theme: Technology issues related to education

Summary

CETIS is the Centre for Education Technology Interoperability Standards. The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) is funding it. CETIS supports the UK Higher and Further education. It advises Universities and Colleges on the strategic, technical and pedagogic implications of educational technology standards. There are a number of Special Interest Groups (SIG's), in some of which Dutch people participate (presentations, mailing list).
Lorna Campbell is co-ordinator of the CETIS Educational Content Special Interest Group (EC-SIG) and assistant director of CETIS. Boon Low is a member of the CETIS Metadata SIG and involved in a couple of projects to create tools for interoperability.

During this session Lorna Campbell gave an overview of why we need learning technology standards and specifications, what those standards try to accomplish, who is developing standards and specifications and how the standards relate to educational practice.
Boon Low demonstrated the IMS Question and Testing Interoperability (QTY) specifications.

Why do we need learning technology standards and specifications?
Learning technology standards and specifications prevent content from being 'locked into' proprietary systems (and e.g. version problems); they make sure that (educational) content can be reused and be shared; finally they facilitate interoperability (between different 'players').

What do learning technology interoperability standards do?
They enable users to locate appropriate content, plan educational scenarios (EML, Learning Design), deliver educational content tailored to learners' requirements (EML, Simple Sequencing, SCORM). It also enables them to share content between systems and ensures that educational content is accessible to all users.

Who is developing specifications?
Specifications are being developed by: IMS Global Learning, ADL (Advanced Distributed Learning), CEN/ISSS WSLT, Dublin Core Metadata Initiative, IEEE Learning Technology Standards Committee (LTSC), ISO Sub Committee 36. URLs for each of the groups are available on the slides of the presentation. There are many groups, but they often consist of the same people (many of them Belgian).

Standardisation is not only about metadata specifications. The human side of using metadata is much more complicated: if a course developer needs to fill in a 4-page form to code each of his learning objects, he probably won't do that. The cultural issues also play a role. A lecturer might want to use courses that have been developed by others, but might be reluctant to share his own courses.

Future plans

- Pierre Gorissen (Fontys/DU) has given a presentation on the DU during a SIG meeting last March.
- People from the Netherlands that are interested in interoperability and reuses, are invited to join the mailing list and participate in the discussions.
- Slides from the presentation held by Lorna Campbell will be made available.

Website:
www.cetis.ac.uk

Strategy and Planning for e-Learning

Author: Micha van Wijngaarden, SURF Educatie<F>, Bert Frissen, Hogeschool Brabant

Contact: Les Watson, Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning and Information Services, Glasgow Caledonian University (Les@gcal.ac.uk)

Theme: Policy and Planning

Summary

The strategic overview 'agenda' of the presentation consists of 5 items:
- Context
- Strategic Framework
- Initiatives
- Plans
- Issues.

The Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) - Context is built upon a general (strategic) GCU vision with three keywords: Innovative (in programmes, in learning, and in research), Inclusive (of all sectors of society), Responsive (to the needs of the individual). The GCU operates in a complex (internal and external) environment. Some of the keywords of this complex environment are: Employability, Learning and Teaching, Work Based Learning, Portfolio, Work Place Learning, Staff Development, Partnerships.
Parts of the GCU context are two strategic themes: Strengthen the core, Develop the difference.

Three key-elements are related in a so-called Strategic Framework. The three key elements are visually grouped in a triangle. The key-elements are People (their skills and activities) / Technology (application and pervasiveness) / Environment (design and configuration).

Focussing on e-Learning means thinking about learning first:
- learning is the core business in both the student and the research domains,
- learning is the key process for the development of intellectual capital,
- learning is an essential part of organisational development.

The current e-Learning situation is:
- we are in a transition phase (still)
- solutions are likely to be hybrid/blended ones
- technology is better – but not good enough
- ownership / access is a relevant issue

There are two types of corporate GCU projects: 'Core' related projects and 'Difference' related projects.

'Core' projects:
- Recabling the campus
- New SRS and HR
- Firewall implementation
- New student e-mail facility
- University wide help desk

'Difference' projects:
- Elisu, APU, CITTU
- Blackboard

- Learning Café – Real@Caledonean
- Staff and student portal
- Apple I-Student
- Compaq 'Learning on the move'

Les Watson presents briefly information about some ('difference' related) GCU projects:
- Blackboard (current status: CBS pilot / Extended University level pilot / September University wide implementation)
- Learning Café (current status: provides an environment that places emphasis on social interaction as a medium for learning / is technology rich but not technology dominated / has learning support and access to on-line resources / especially in the Learning Café is developing resources for new skills such as online social presence.)
- Staff and Student Portal (current status and key factors: simplified access to resources / enable lower level applications development to be transparent to the user / extensible to transactions and services. See url: http://my.caledonian.ac.uk.

In relation to the presented Strategic Framework the GCU developments can be connected (current status and plans for the future) to the key-elements People/ Technology/ Environment:
- People: establishing elisu (e-Learning Innovation Support Unit), APU (Academic Practice Unit) and C&IT training unit. PLAN: Integrated Learning Service
- Technology: Blackboard, elisu, student and staff portal development. PLANS: Blackboard University wide, SASS
- Environment: Learning Café. PLAN: New £10 million Learning Centre.

The Learning and Information Services as a university wide service-unit undertakes processes/activities to reach a situation where 70 % of all the (service) transactions could be handled through combined use of Automatic Service or Self Service. 20% of the (service) transactions are a General Service (by means of combinations of Students Requests and Special Assistance). The remaining 10% are Special Services, which will be provided when students request for counsel/guidance etc.

The presentation ends with 5 GCU Strategic Approach Service Theme's:
- blended solutions
- service provision
- synergy – holistic approach
- strengthen the core (see 'core' projects)
- develop the difference (see 'difference' projects)

Future plans

Back in the Netherlands we received an e-mail attachment with the presentation slides from Les Watson. More details about the strategy of C&IT at GCU could be found here: http://home.gcal.ac.uk/issg/strategy/citstrat.htm.

Learning Café and ELISU

Author: Bert Dasselaar, Hogeschool INHOLLAND, Manon Gorissen,Universiteit Maastricht

Contact: Mary Cuttle, Glasgow Caledonian University, m.cuttle@gcal.ac.uk

Theme: Learning and teaching, staff development

Summary

Before we listened to the last presentations on this monday afternoon in Glasgow, we were given a tour in the e-Learning Café of Caledonian University in Glasgow. We were offered a cup of tea or coffee and some delicious cakes from the bar in the café and we were astonished that we were allowed to drink and eat while using a computer in this Café. When we looked around, all the students and some staff members in the Café where eating or drinking and still the computers where functioning and it wasn't a mess, on the contrary, it was clean and the atmosphere was sociable and pleasant, like in a real café.
The computers in the Learning Café are placed on different tables, some tables are high, so you can stand, or sit on a kind of a bar stool and other tables have the height of a normal worktable. There is a lot of space between the computers. This makes it possible to work together with more people on one computer and there is enough room to spread out books and papers. If you don't want to use a computer, you can sit on one of the couches also available in the Learning Café.

The Learning Café, a presentation by Jan Howden, Senior Librarian Learning Services at Glasgow Caledonian University.
Scotland has not only a café tradition, but also a tradition of libraries offering a variety of resources and seating styles. The Learning Café combines these two traditions and provides a social Learning Space.
The ideas behind the Learning Café can be explained by a definition of a social learning space. There are several aspects to look into:

- The learning theme, develop web-based activities to analyse learning and get information about motivation, learning styles, confidence and recognise stress. Complimentary activities are eating and drinking, recreation, massage, provision of computer facilities what means use of University Intranet for non-curriculum information, wider resources available on the web to use together to support learning and mutual support producing work with computers packages.
- Lifelong learning remit; Intend all students to sign up as Lifelong Learners and hopefully Lifelong café users.
- Collaborative / Cooperative Learning; using the learner support person as they walk round to show them onscreen problems (groups or individuals), searching catalogues and databases together, using the virtual learning environment together, settling in for long joint projects work
- Human learner support; an interpreter and promoter of the learning tools and systems for the student: e-mail, portal, VLE, passwords, catalogues, databases; student awareness of this role

The success of the Learning Cafe can be explained by a citation of the designer, Les Watson, Pro Vice Principal, Learning Services and Learning Café: 'A social learning space supported by technology but not dominated by it'.

In answering one of the questions Jan told us that there is about 1 computer to 10 students available and there are no complaints about the amount of available computers. Jan guessed that about 60-65% of the students have their own computer at home. Jan invited us to mail her if we would like to have more information or if we have any questions. Her mail address is: j.howden@gcal.ac.uk

Some useful url's are:
realcaledonian.ac.uk
www.intoreal.com
www.scran.ac.uk

A comment of one of the students on the Learning Café was that he missed printers and that the space to save data is too small, only 10 MB. In general he was not pleased that the Learning Café was created in place of the former study hall.

The e-Learning Innovation Support Unit (ELISU), a presentation by Mary Cuttle, ELISU Coordinator at Glasgow Caledonian University.
The e-Learning Innovation Support Unit has been established to support the University objectives for on-line and life-long learning. It offers expertise in the design, development and implementation of e-Learning to academic staff across the faculties.
The Unit provides:
- Practical help in the development of e-Learning projects
- Advice and consultancy on any aspect of e-Learning including: pedagogy, learning technologies, implementation and evaluation
- Information on e-Learning activities within the University
- A website containing resources to support staff developing e-Learning

The ELISU consist of four members, one co-ordinator, two e-Learning developers and one e-Learning information officer.
All different themes in e-Learning, Internet training, net skills and staff development issues are brought together and accessible via an e-map. This e-map is a really good idea; it gives you a good overview in one web page. See the screen dump, or better, visit the site: http://elisu.gcal.ac.uk

The development results are saved in a personal portfolio of each staff member. The ELISU website provides not only a good overview of all e-Learning expertise, there are also many interesting links to relevant e-Learning issues. If there are questions, or need further information, Mary Cuttle is willing to help. Her mail address is: m.cuttle@gcal.ac.uk.

Teaching and Learning with Blackboard

Author Jet van Mensvoort, Wageningen Universiteit

Contact: Gillian Robberts, Noreen Sippique, Ron Livingstone

Theme: teaching and learning, policy and planning and technology issues related to education

Summary

This session described the Glasgow Caledonian University's experience of implementing Blackboard within de Caledonian Business school, and provided an overview of the outcome, both pedagogical en technical. Tree speakers talked about their experience with Blackboard (BB).

First there was a lecture about the Caledonian Business School strategy & UG framework by Gillian Robbert. He described the implementation of blackboard for their courses. Steps they mentioned where:
- Organise student support for working with the system
- Started with a small group of users
- Good fit between modules
- Pedagogic research
- Working on teachers conception of e-Learning
- Teacher support provide consistency and convincing

Second: Noreen Sioddique talked about the use of Management Learning Environment (MLE) and the use of discussion board. Noreen explains about her experience with the use of discussion groups in Bb.
The students' context
- They never met before
- New subject to learn
- As introduction

The first assignment was to let students introduce themselves in Bb. Another assignment was to react on students' approaches. Some students reacted very detailed on this assignment.

Third: Ron Livingstone talked about his experience with Blackboard for part-time, post-graduate students (MBA programme). The lecture went into the use of discussion groups and an overview of statistics and planning. Task specific projects were support by group discussion, the class discussion was used for more general discussion points. The students were geographical spread within the groups so there was really a need for discussions within the MLE. The statistics and planning possibility of Blackboard was used to evaluate the use of Blackboard.

Discussion

How to work with the discussion possibility in Blackboard? When using group discussion, when plenary, what's the role of the teacher in the discussion and how to keep up the discussion process? As a teacher you've to learn and practice with that before you can do best. It depends on the context, use and goal of the discussion.

Strategic Overview of ICT in Teaching and Learning

Author Jet van Mensvoort, Wageningen Universiteit, Judith Schoonenboom, Vrije Universiteit

Contact: Prof Derek Law and Prof George Gordon

Theme: Policy and Planning

Summary

Prof Gordon gave a presentation on Quality assurance, quality enhancement and the teaching and learning strategy at the University of Strathclyde.

Since Quality Assurance - institutionalised in the Quality Assurance Agency or QAA (www.qaa.ac.uk) - became a major concern at UK universities in the nineties, centralization has become an issue. Traditionally, faculties and deans have much autonomy. Quality Assurance, however, assumes that at central university level, facts about quality are known, and thus the question arises how a university as an institution does assure its quality.

In the quality assurance process, quality is measured from two different perspectives. Quality is measured both within one discipline, e.g. physics, and in one topic, e.g. assessment. For a university, measuring up to the standards of the QAA is very important; although universities that get a bad remark can improve their quality within a year before they are revisited, such a bad remark will definitely be noticed by the press, and can therefore seriously harm an institution.

Emphasis on quality assurance can be dangerous, in that it can lead universities to focus purely on compliance, and thus stand still. This may constitute a barrier to implementing innovations like e-Learning, since such innovations always bring a certain risk of failure with them. For example, an e-Learning course may evaluate badly, simply because many students experience technical problems. Therefore, a new process is start off, in which a check on quality assurance is complemented by a check on quality enhancement.

The University of Strathclyde's teaching & learning strategy is based on the 'seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education', which has resulted in a list of 14 criteria for good educational practice, which includes a variety of assessment methods: recognition that the form of assessment has a great influence on student behaviour; fair, valid and reliable assessments; formulation of clear outcomes; the ratio between dialogue and monologue; timeliness and form of assessment feedback; insurance of cooperative tasks; assessment of group work; presence of peer review; consideration of (differences in) prior knowledge; consideration of students with special needs; presence of both staff-led and student-led activities.

Derek Law, director of information resources at the University of Strathclyde, gave a presentation titled 'Information Strategy: an expensive luxury.. or a necessary evil?'

Prof Law's presentation was devoted to the University of Strathclyde's execution of two recommendations in the 1997 Dearing report - Higher Education in the Learning Society (www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/ncihe) - to develop an information strategy and to ensure all students access to a networked computer, possibly a portable computer.

In forming an information strategy, the University of Strathclyde decided to make a division into eight information components: Teaching materials, Learning delivery, Digital library, Training and incentives, Student intranet, Standards and evaluation, Pervasive networking, Devices.

On each component, a strategy was formed, in which quality and finance had to be balanced.
With each component more than one university department is involved, and as a consequence, the University of Strathclyde's information strategy requires breaking down the traditional division between faculties, IT-department and library and appointing a director of information resources.

The strategies that were formed on the above mentioned eight components include: developing teaching materials both in-house and commercially; delivery of materials through both Clyde Virtual University and in wireless classrooms; set-up of a digital library; obligatory certification on information literacy for all students; development of person portals for all students; gaining insight into standards and copyright issues; set-up of a Gigabit backbone and laptops for all students.

Millennium Laptop Project

Author Ria van Muiswinkel, Hogeschool van Arnhem en Nijmegen, Ankie van de Broek, Universiteit Maastricht

Contact: Bill Johnston

Theme: teaching and learning, policy and planning, staff development and technology issues related to education

Summary

At Strathclyde University, the millennium laptop project was established, to introduce laptops as an innovative support for the use of ICT within academic programmes and administration. The use of mobile computing is introduced because of the many possibilities of working with laptops. The students have the opportunity to access to learning resources and student services anytime and anywhere they like. Also because of the portability of the laptops it is for students possible to work together with classmates or conduct research at home. The goal of the project is to provide a modern learning and teaching environment.

In November 2000 a pilot started for first year students of the Undergraduate Business Studies who registered for the 'integrative core'. This core has been designed to encourage familiarity with and use of ICT to support study and to improve transfer. The students borrowed a laptop for one year, which stayed in possession of the University. For this project a new classroom is build in which a number of computer-islands (one island consists of four chairs and a computer screen) and radio transmitters enhance the functionality of the classroom. Underneath every island there are several possibilities to plug in the laptop. In front of the classroom there is a big screen that can be seen by every student. It is possible to show to content of the big screen on the computer screens of the islands and vice versa. Because of the radio transmitters the students are able to work in every lab room of the University. In the University the use of radio technology has been considered successful. That is why they are getting more and more places in the university where students are able to plug in. Also the design of the classroom has been taken over in the University.

During the pilot in 2001 – 2002, 550 students participated in the laptop-project with one special classroom and radio transmitting with connections in the library. In addition to the normal evaluation (that has been executed with index cards, the help of a staff/student committee and an away-day), an integrative evaluation methodology is used, by interviewing different stakeholders such as teachers that have not been involved in the project, students of other classes and the support-division.

Positive remarks of the laptop project
- Better time management, allocation of assignments, file sharing and standardisation of software
- Quick access to research material (but the validity issues need attention).
- No more time-consuming drawing-up timetables and reserving classrooms.
- The students become more confidence because of the new way of working. Without the laptops the students were also able to work this way, but they did not, while their way of working has changed dramatically and processes appear that did not appear earlier.
- Students work harder and get more professional with technology. This can be concluded out of the presentations that get more professional.
- The increase of communication between students can be seen by the fact that students are willing to have more meetings (also virtual) because they now can work anytime anywhere. They put more effort in work outside the class hours than previous years. Also the communication between student and staff is quicker.

- Skills achieved in previous years after one year, are now achieved after 6 months, because of the fact that they now sit with the material.
- To be witness of the changes for the best of student-skills and teaching styles is very rewarding

Negative remarks of the laptop project
- Sometimes students do not bring their laptop because the laptop is too heavy and/or the students do not know where to keep the laptop during the day. Therefore security and weight are important issues for the future.
- Distraction effect: it is possible that during class students get distracted by the attraction of the Internet.
- Group activities are less transparent to staff. It is more difficult to monitor the progress of the individual student.
- The purchase of a laptop creates a problem for some future students. For these students a loan-facility is offered. If even this creates a problem other solutions are searched for. Last year 70% of the participating student bought the laptop after a loan period. Now most students buy a laptop from the beginning.
- Mobile computing is time-consuming, complex and costly for the support-staff.

These remarks have led to:
- Demand for use of laptops in other courses.
- Transferable skills between integrative studies and principal studies.
- More efficient and effective teaching.
- Wish for integration with other departments of the university.

Discussion

In the discussion the issues of RSI, security and laptops for teachers were raised:
- RSI. Only 5% of the students of the millennium project have RSI-problems. This low percentage is attributed to the fact that most of the students have a job beside their study.
- Security is a problem. Much attention is paid to the security and safekeeping of the laptops. Theft of laptops is small.
- Last year teachers were provided with a free laptop. This year teachers have a laptop at their disposal according to a time-sharing system.

Here you'll find more information about the millennium laptop project:
www.strath.ac.uk/projects/millennium/index.html.

Virtual Communities for Problem-based Learning

Author Petra Wentzel, Vrije Universiteit,Pierre Gorissen, Fontys Hogescholen

Contact: Neil Ballantyne, senior Lecturer, Department of Social Work, University of Strathclyde (cjds03@strath.ac.uk) and Bob Munro, Senior Lecurer, Department of Business & Computer Education, University of Strathclyde (r.k.munro@strath.ac.uk

Theme: Teaching and learning, Staff development

Summary

In this one-hour session Neil Ballantyne and Bob Munro of the University of Strathclyde (www.strath.ac.uk) introduced us to two virtual communities for problem-based learning.

Neil Ballantyne from the Department of Social Work introduced the course 'Family and Lifespan development' (see below for links to websites). He uses problem based teaching and online learning to provide students with possibilities to relate their inert knowledge to complex real world situations. The virtual community contains almost real-life examples of problematic family situations, with maps and images, demographic information, street scenes, QuickTime videos with interviews of family members, genograms of the family and other case material. There is an online discussion area to which all students and tutors subscribe. In this problem based virtual community students work collaboratively in small groups to make an assessment of the problems at hand in the case study. There are no lectures, but it was the tutors task to facilitate the online discussions, give feedback and monitor the groups. Students meet each other in the virtual learning environment and face-to-face.
After this course ran in a virtual environment the following conclusion could be made: the tutors found that the students in general were better able to use their knowledge in specific cases, the quality of their work was overall better (but this could be a cohort variation), the nature of the discussion is much more transparent and accessible to both student and tutor, the cases were more realistic through the use of audio and video and the role of the tutor had changed from presenting key ideas to supporting students reasoning.

Bob Munro presented a national initiative for developing a virtual community for learning schoolteachers how to use ICT in their education. The virtual community was not developed to teach teachers how to use computer software, but focuses on the pedagogical possibilities of ICT in schools. A CD-ROM and website were created which contained a Communications Room, Resources Room and Tutorial Room. When a schoolteacher takes this one-year course he is presented with exercises, resources and examples of good practice. Together with a tutor he develops a structured scheme for the possible use of ICT in his education. The use of this virtual environment has just got underway. Problems that are being faced so far are the difficulty of updating the CD-ROM and the amount and length of time that the development of this program took. Like in the example of Neil Ballantyne the tutors had to learn to work in a new way, less as a presenter and more as a coach.

Future plans

After the session it was agreed that members of this session would start a short survey on the quality of comparable British and Dutch ICT-for-school-teachers initiatives. It was thought that the quality of the work presented was very high and for this topic non-existing at this level in The Netherlands. Possibilities for use and transfer to the Dutch situation will be investigated.
Links/Websites:

- http://cvu.strath.ac.uk/courseware/socialwork/fal
  Look at the Family and Lifespan Development module online, view the video's etc.
- http://otis.scotcit.ac.uk
  The Online Tutoring Skills (OTiS) Project Website
- http://www.strath.ac.uk/Departments/CAP/surfscot/ballantyne.ppt
  Slides of the presentation by Neil Ballantyne
- http://otis.scotcit.ac.uk/casestudy/ballantyne.doc
  Case Study document about the course 'Family and Lifespan Development'

The InterActive Classroom

Author Hans Steenvoorden, Educational Faculty Amsterdam, Marten Douma, Learning Technology Service team, Haarlem University of Higher Vocational Education

Contact: David J. Nicol, Centre for Academic Practice

Theme: teaching and learning, technology issues related to education

Summary

Dr David J. Nicol (Centre for Academic Practice):
1. Issues in Engineering Education are:
a. Conceptual Misunderstandings
b. Motivation
c. Large Classes

2. New Approaches to Teaching and Learning in Engineering (NATALIE)
a. Active Learning
b. Collaborative Learning
c. Teaching Environment

3. The Learning Studio
a. Students sit and work in groups
b. Each student has input device
c. Class is assessment-driven: concept tests
d. Immediate feedback – histogram
e. Lecturer sees which students have correct/ incorrect answers, can ask them to explain their reasoning
f. Multimedia environment

Dr Robert Hamilton (Department of Mechanical Engineering):
4. Interactive classroom with a difference: key features of CCS
a. Students sit and work in groups
b. Each student has input device
c. Class is assessment-driven: concept tests
d. Immediate feedback: histogram
e. Lecturer sees which students have correct/incorrect answers, can ask them to explain their reasoning
f. Multimedia environment

5. Sheet with question for group, answering options; example:
- Picture: Man on 'wheels with wall', throwing ball against wall
- Question: Does the car move to the right, left, or remains in place?
- Audience vote
- Results of the vote are presented in histogram
- Discussion in pairs about answers
- Second vote
- The teacher explains good answer [2] (impulse law)

By exchanging arguments students reconstruct their concepts, and teacher gets idea of the misconcepts.

6. Two models on Technology in Education

Peer Instruction (Harvard)	Class-wide discussion (UMass)
Concept question	Concept question
Think individually	Group discussion
Individual response	Individual response
Feedback display	Feedback display
Group discussion	Class-wide discussion
Retest question	Lecturer explanation
Feedback display	Next concept
Lecturer explanation	
Next concept test	

7. Results survey: Individual thinking first is best because:

a. By the time you discuss it you all have your own opinions so you are less likely to think about their answer and just agree with other people.
b. You can see where you have gone wrong in your original answer and learn from it.
c. It can help you identify misconceptions if you think individually first.
d. It makes you reason your point of view before explaining it to others

8. Discussion topics

a. Why not give the questions to the students a day before class, and collect the answers by mail?
   Reaction: less flexible for teacher in class.
b. Novelty effect: are the results getting less positive after 3 months?
   Reaction: variation in assignments gives students enough motivation.
c. Group size in Harvard model: why four?
   Reaction: depends on type of question.
d. Is this system also usable for other subjects than (mechanical) engineering?
   Reaction: In US this system is used for modern languages and for information technology courses.
e. Interaction takes time: how much time is left for scheduled content?
   Reaction: 'It's not the time you spent, but the time that is spend useful' (quotation F.D.Roosevelt).

Supporting Students Personal Development Planning

Author Rick de Graaff, Universiteit Utrecht, Judith Schoonenboom, Vrije Universiteit

Contact: Dr. Lorraine Stefani, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Centre for Academic Practice

Theme: teaching and learning and technology issues related to education

Summary

In the UK, as a result of QAA regulations progress files are kept for all individual students. Since recently, those files are expected to contain not only a Transcript (A comprehensive, verifiable record of learning and achievement of the individual learner), but also a Personal Development Planning (PDP): an individual's personal records of learning and achievements, progress reviews and future plans. PDP can be compared with Portfolio's, which are becoming popular in Dutch Higher Education.

From the introduction and usage of PDP by a network of pioneers, PDP is now on top of the agenda in Scotland; the rest of the UK is following as well. With the implementation of PDP, students are considered as self-determined, independent and reflective learners: self-assessment is a major component of PDP's. Personal Development Planning is a structured and supported process undertaken by individuals to reflect upon their own learning, performance and or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development.

The aim of the usage of PDP's is the enhancement of teaching & learning, by promoting learner autonomy, facilitating reflective skills and by fostering progression and retention.
Lorraine Stefani stresses the importance of starting from the student's experience, in order to avoid a mechanistic or reductionist approach of PDP. Therefore, it is important to understand:
- how students currently view their development
- if their intellectual perspective changes over time
- if their attitude to a given discipline evolves over time
- how students tune into their subject
- how do students learn
- what is their perspective on effective learning.

Personal tutors, advisors of studies and careers advisory services organize student support for PDP. However, this is not well handled yet: no proper staff development for PDP tutoring is available.
The importance of interaction with employers on the content and organization of PDP is taken very seriously. One of the outcomes of this interaction is the focus on key skills, in order to avoid a too detailed PDP. Another main issue is the link between continuous professional development (CPD) for staff and PDP.

Discussion 1

PDP in the UK has strong similarities with Dutch portfolios. The planning aspect seems very important in PDP in the UK. In the Netherlands this is a main issue as well in Universities of Higher Vocational Education. In the traditional Universities the focus is more on dossier building of personal achievement.

Lorraine Stefani gave three different examples of PDP implementation:

Example 1: Engineering Management
PDP is used here as help for process support in group project work. Students worked on a website instead of a paper-based project, they focused on self-assessment and group performance, and the project management was made public. Student support was organised by a series of introductory workshops covering group project work, action planning and self-assessment, and web based presentation skills. Initially, students expected their tutors to evaluate them and didn't appreciate self-assessment very much. Staff was sceptic on self assessment as well. They employers, however, stressed the importance of self-assessment. As a result self-evaluation and self planning has become key factors now in PDP.

Discussion 2

The relationship with employers is very important at Strathclyde University; this is an important factor for PDP success.

Example 2: Physiology and Pharmacology
Introduction of an Electronic Personal Development Portfolio in and Undergraduate Degree programme (class size 150 students):
- Web based personal storage area
- Access for student and student counsellor only
- Assessment output to include essays/ reports, presentations in PowerPoint format etc
- Students own material from placements, extra curricular work, a CV etc.
- On completion degree students can obtain a record of their portfolio on CD
- Personal Development Portfolio worth 2 credits within degree structure

In this pilot it was found that the key skills had to be well defined for students and tutors:
- Communication and presentation skills
- Analytical and problem solving skills
- Information technology
- Team work/ collaboration
- Planning and organisation

Example 3: Napier University - Hospitality and Tourism Management
Reflective (electronic) portfolios for work-based learning (‘stage’ in Dutch)
The function of PDP here is the accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) and to empower students to take responsibility for own work based learning. The assessment is in four parts, with a main role for PDP:
- Learning plan 30%
- Industrial assessors report 20%
- Reflective learning portfolio 30%
- Critical self-assessment 20%

Students evaluated the introduction of the portfolios very positively.

End discussion

What is the relationship between PDP and the Transcript in the students' progress files?
Stefani: The transcript contains all courses and grades, and the student's achievement in personal planning, which is further specified in the PDP.

Conclusion

This was a very interesting presentation for the Dutch delegation, as PDP has recently become an important issue in Dutch Higher Education. For us, the key aspects were:

- The role of the QAA as a national institution which stimulates the implementation of PDP.
- The role of the employers in the implementation of PDP and the focus of the portfolios.
- The focus on the planning and self assessment function of personal development portfolios.
- The explicit relationship between continuing professional development for staff and PDP for students.
- The importance of staff training in PDP tutoring and assessment.
- The importance of student training in self assessment.
- The substantial inclusion of self assessment and personal planning in course grades.

In conclusion, Dutch and UK PDP developers and researchers will benefit from further collaboration and exchange. Therefore, further contact on this issue, between institutions and at SURF/ALT level, is highly recommended.

Sheffield

Activity Based Costing

Author Josette Donnison, Universiteit van Amsterdam

Contact: Sarah Heginbotham, Sheffield Hallam University,

Theme: Policy and planning

Summary

Activity based costing (ABC) is used to assign all costs within an organization to specific activities. Especially in e-Learning one assumes that there are many hidden costs, that could be clarified this way. The project concerning ABC was started to familiarise with the phenomenon and conduct a pilot study. The project was founded by the JISC and was restricted to a six-month period. For the software, a partner was chosen with no previous involvement in Higher Education, but experienced in the private and the public sector. The ABC process entails: decide on the cost object, hold management briefings, create an activity dictionary, allocate general ledger transactions to activities, collect and analyse staff time, allocate the activity costs to cost objects. All these are quite time consuming and actually hardly feasible within the 6 months. There were several problems to be faced among which the limited time and staff resistance seem the most general. From an earlier conducted study at Heriot-Watt it became clear that all staff data should be collected anonymous. This poses a problem in terms of non-responders.

In e-Learning three major activities were recognised: Planning and Development, Production and Delivery and Evaluation and Maintenance. In the costs one can specify Initial set-up costs, Key recurrent costs and Time spent on activities.
In the total costs model (Johnstone and Russell, 2002) it is stated that:
- People costs outweigh technology costs
- Don't forget the student support services
- Scalability and course development are the two primary cost determinants
- Scalability can keep the costs down
- Sharing course development costs saves money

Comparison of production costs show
- A lecture 1 unit
- Audio cassette/ radio/ teleconference 2 units
- Video lectures 2-5 units
- Computer network mediated communication 2-5 units
- Printed material 2-10 units
- High quality video or TV programmes 20-50 units
- Pre-programmed computer based learning 20-50 units
- Multimedia 50-100 units

All these costs have to be considered in the development and implementation of e-Learning. So the amount of students that use a course and the life span of a course are to be considered when setting up e-Learning.

Details of the project can be found at www.shu.ac.uk/cnl

Other useful sites are:
Claeys,2001
(www.nineveh.polito.it/ninevh/thematic_analysis/?display_page=cost_analysis_intro)
www.westga.edu/~distance/mcfadden24.html
Boettcher, 1999 (www.cren.net/~jboettch/dlmay.htm)
Schooley, 2001 (www.ciol.com/content/news/trends/101102301.asp)
www.learningcircuits.org/feb2000/feb2000_elearn.html
www.learningcircuits.org/feb2002/feb2002_moran.html

Wireless and Mobility Issues

Author Lisa Gommer, Universiteit Twente

Contact: Paul Bacsich, Sheffield Hallam University

Theme: Technology issues related to education

Summary

In his presentation Paul draws a picture of students who are studying outside in the sun or who like to study in the pub or while waiting for the elevator. He talks about the vision of a 'city of learning' where a seamless wireless net work is available at all places where learners gather, enabling them to choose where they would like to learn. 'Wireless' is the keyword here.
From the European structural fund two Universities (Hallam & University of Sheffield) became € 1.000.000 with a view to pilot a seamless wireless network at near large nodes of learning and to set up a test bed for research on wireless networks (MAN's = Metropolitan Area Network). Paul Bacsich was involved in this project as a project director.
Further Paul considered at length the following issues:

The benefits of wireless networks are:
- learning anywhere, anytime, anyhow;
- plug in to desktops, laptops on PDA;
- connect machines without access point;
- walk around and stay connected to the MAN;
- flexible;
- use any network links;
- provide a secure connection

A wireless network won't:
- just plug in and expect them to work
- offer the same performance as a wired network;
- be as secure as wired;
- it is radio equipment and will go 'too far';
- access points will interfere with each other.

There are some important points of research to be done:
- security
- roaming, persistent IP address
- performance
- strategy
- m-learning (mobilearning)
- MLE's for m-learning that operates on a small screen
- devices that can adapt for Web and email access
- where and when students really learn
- relation between time poor learning/learning objects and wireless access.

Discussion

In the end the following issues were discussed:
- driving force for people using a WW (Wireless Workplace);
- the security issue: there are no experts in the University in that field and outsourcement is too expensive;

- technical problems that are to be solved.

Also, the student perspective was discussed. Paul told us, that they expected the undergraduate students to have laptops and be very enthusiastic about wireless access. By starting this project, the university wanted to be one step ahead of the students' needs. In reality, the need for wireless access wasn't very high. Most undergraduates prefer using a desktop computer at home instead of dragging a heavy and expensive laptop to the university.

UK Perspectives and Initiatives in ICT

Author Pierre Gorissen, Fontys Hogescholen, Micha van Wijngaarden, SURF Educatie<F>

Contact: Tom Franklin, Senior Advisor at the Technologies Centre (tom.franklin@ltsn.ac.uk)

Theme: Policy and planning, Teaching and learning

Summary

About 15 members of the Dutch delegation attended the session jointly organised by the LTSN Generic Centre, the JISC Technologies Centre and the Institute for Learning and Teaching.

JISC Technologies Centre, TechLearn and TechDis
Ted Smith gave an introduction on the JISC Technologies Centre, TechLearn and TechDis.
Website JISC Technologies Centre: www.technologiescentre.ac.uk
The slides are online available: www.techlearn.ac.uk/NewDocs/Technologies Centre General Introduction.ppt

TeachLearn supports a co-ordinated approach to the use of innovative technologies in learning and teaching across UK Further and Higher Education. Current work includes E-tutoring briefings, videoconferencing/tele-presence, wireless technologies, broadband technologies, re-usable objects for education simulation, ubiquitous computing (anywhere anytime computing).
TechDis is an ICT advice and support service to enhance access for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to learning, teaching, research and administration.

Learning an Teaching Support Network (LTSN)
Slides: handouts on paper, slides should be online (no URL available yet), website LTSN, website Generic Centre: www.ltsn.ac.uk and www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre

Brenda Smith gave an overview of both the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) and the role the Generic Centre plays within the LTSN.
The LTSN is a network of 24 subject centres based in higher education institutions throughout the UK. The four HE funding bodies in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland funds it. It aims to promote high quality learning and teaching through the development and transfer of good practice in all subject disciplines and to prove a 'one-stop shop' of learning and teaching resources for the HE community. All subject centres' websites can be accessed from the LTSN website.

The subject centres are a mix of single-site and consortium-based centres, all located within relevant subject departments and hosted by HE institutions. The subject centres aim at having a key departmental contact for each subject area in each of the institutions. They do things like set-up regional networks of people involved in a certain subject area, organise workshops, seminars and conferences etc.
The Generic Centre tries to build links between the subject centres and is involved in the issues that are common to all subject areas.

The LTSN focuses on four major areas: assessment, employability, widening participation, e-Learning.

An example of this is the Assessment Series - available online (www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre/projects/assessment/assess_series.asp). It is a series of briefings on subject regarding assessment and it identifies four groups of users of the guides: Senior management, head of department, lecturers and students. Especially the last usergroup is often forgotten, often it is assumed that student know all they kneed to know about assessment, which is not the case of course.
Another example is the series of starter guides for on-line learning and teaching, also available online: www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre/projects/elearning.

Implementing VLE's and e-Learning
Tom Franklin and Kathy Wiles talked about issues regarding the implementation of VLE's and e-Learning.
A report by the Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association (UCISA) regarding 'Management and implementation of Virtual Learning Environments' is available online: www.ucisa.ac.uk/TLIG/vle/VLEsurvey.pdf.

Even in the UK, for students, geographical distance only sometimes plays a role when deciding to choose for distance learning. Most of the time it are adults that already work and the possibility of a 'timeshift' in learning (i.e. learn in the evening) plays a much more important role.

The Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILT)
The ILT is a members based organisation for all who teach and support learning in higher education in the UK. Their aim is to establish standards of performance based on achievement of individuals and accreditation of staff development programmes. They provide support for their members and communities of practice. ILT members have to pay a yearly fee to be a member.
Website: www.ilt.ac.uk

Future plans

Possible co-operation for a research project regarding benchmarking the use of VLE's in the UK, Australia and the Netherlands.

The UK eUniversity

Author Ellen Simons, Hogeschool Brabant, Judith Schoonenboom, Vrije Universiteit

Contact: Prof Paul Bacsich, Sheffields Hallam University

Theme: Policy and planning

Summary

The UK eUniversity aims at being an e-Learning vehicle for all UK universities. Its ambition since it has started in 2000 has been to gain a considerable share in the big market for e-Learning for English-speaking students at university level, and to meet the need for more e-Learning delivery in the UK. The government has put up 100 million euros, thereby also hoping to encourage public-private partnership.

In the UKeU, different partners work together in different roles. The universities are mainly responsible for accreditation, development and training. The government acts as a sponsor. A few IT-partners are involved as content providers. At this moment, the decision has been made that one university will be responsible for accreditation; the most probable candidate for this role is the OU.

In developing programmes, the UKeU decided to develop at postgraduate and continuous personal development (CPD) level first. By now, three masters have been developed in Learning in the Connected Economy (Cambridge University and Open University), Public Policy and Management (York University) and Information Technology and Management (Sheffield Hallam University). These masters will be available by January 2003. Five more masters are currently being negotiated. A new call for programmes aims at both consolidating the existing master programmes and at widening participation by providing public good courses. These courses will be level 1 (first year), mostly vocational, courses.

UKeU courses are delivered primarily by electronic means. The UKeU has build its own platform for delivery, which contains both a learning management system (LMS) and a learning administration system (LAS). The platform supports collaborative working and quality regimes. It has an open architecture, to allow plug-ins. With respect to collaborative working, the emphasis is on asynchronous conferencing, which is necessary in an international environment with different time zones.

Website: www.ukeu.com.

Staff Development for Technical Skills

Author Frans de Groot, Christelijke Agrarische Hogeschool

Contact: Ken Mills, Sheffield Hallam University

Theme: Staff development

Summary

Sheffield Hallam University has a Technical staff of 253 persons.
The staff supports a range of facilities: Laboratories, workshops, networks (WAN,LAN),PC-installation and support, design facilities, etc.

Development plan:
- Outline shortages
- Establish appropriate training
- Review available training
- Evaluate

In the case of Hallam Technical Staff:
- Staff members lacked IT and other skills.
- Project started with Establishment of skill shortages.

Appropriate training was established: flexible courses developed by the university from standard courses.
- Most were IT- related: Basic IT skills, Dos, MS Office.
- Other courses: Time management, Presentation skills, etc.
- Most courses were for 12 –15 participants.
- Staff members were motivated by promotion possibilities.

Off spring:
Staff members are more self-confident and perform better.

Problems:
- Release of Staff during training (some courses take 3 days)
- Reserve list to cover illness, etc
- Non-attendance -> fines (on the department)

Technical Staff in Teaching and Learning Material
Technicians have specific practical experience. Combining academic and technical experience gives better products.

Discussion

Q: Do people not leave after training?
A: No, they stay and perform better.
Q: How do you motivate people to attend training?
A: Promotion depends on training. People become more self-confident.
Q: Do enough persons attend the courses?
A: The use of reserve lists prevents that a group becomes to small in most cases.

Conclusions

It was a nice, lively presentation with enough possibilities for questions and discussion.
The way of developing the IT skills of the staff is useful for Dutch institutions of higher education. Mr Ken Mills should be invited to the meeting next year.
Website: www.shu.ac.uk/upgrade2000/home.htm

The MSc in e-Learning

Author Ireen Folkerts, Hanzehogeschool Groningen

Contact: Brian Hudson, Sheffield Hallam University

Theme: teaching and learning

Summary

The participants of this session were three Dutch visitors, two students of the course presented, as well as the director of the school of Health and Social Care and a public relations consultant of Hallam University. This resulted in a vivid discussion after the presentations.

Background context of the presented programme
The background context is the MSc programme in e-Learning, Multimedia and Consultancy that was developed from the TRIPLE M Advanced Curriculum Development (CDA) Project supported by the European Commission under the SOCRATES programme (1998-2001). This is one of several recent projects to arise from the activities of the Thematic Network for Teacher Education in Europe (TNTEE). The programme has involved an active partnership between Arnhem-Nijmegen University of Higher Vocational Education in the Netherlands, the University of Oulu in Finland and Sheffield Hallam University in the UK.
The experience of tutors and students involved in the first unit of the programme Open and Flexible Learning Environments (OFLE) is outlined in Owen, Hudson and Tervola (2001). In the paper by Hudson, Hudson and Steel (2001) they draw on that experience but focus on the second unit of the programme Digital Media Applications (DMA) that took place during the second semester of 2000-01. This unit involved ten students working together based at two local study centres in Nijmegen and Sheffield. This work is ongoing and a fuller paper is in the process of being produced - Hudson, Hudson and Steel (2001)

Presentation by Brian Hudson (School of Education)
We became an overview of the background of the project, the philosophy and structure of the programme and the pedagogical and didactical approach adopted and the Students Outline of the current unit on Research Methodologies that is being co-tutored with David Owen (SHU) and Klaas van Veen from the University of Nijmegen. The learning environment used is Learning Community Profiler (LC Prof. Oy, Finland) developed at the University of Oulu.

The team based the programme on three foundation units: Learner - Culture - Technology.

The programme aimed for the development of knowledge building learning communities. Autonomous learners are interdependence in knowledge building learning communities.
The programme has a project and team based work process, which involves a gradually shifting balance from more supported and directed to more independent learning through the course.
Key aspects are: the role of technology as potentially affording new opportunities for collaborative learning and for supporting it, conditions to develop meaningful learning communities that can select appropriate tasks and activities and assessment for learning.

Presentation by Alison Hudson (LTI Centre for Multimedia in Education)
A follow-up session around the other current unit of the MSc with the second cohort on Digital Media Applications (20 students)

Alison is similarly working with two groups of students in Sheffield and Nijmegen with tutors in both local centres. The learning environment used in this case is Blackboard.
Alison gave a view of the pedagogical approach of the course.

A working international team to produce a DMA prototype
At the start of the course the communication, in different ways, got full attention. Face-to-face communication was available (video conferencing) and used. To work in international teams, students had to recognise and overcome cultural and language differences. The approach to start the course was that students choose partners for a group and proposed a theme for the project. Communication therefore at the start was as well social as functional.
Students made individual diaries to structure their learning. The portfolio (contending essential parts of the diary) is the main product for assessment.

To show the group vividly the use of videoconference, we had an online discussion with Klaas van Veen in Nijmegen.

The goals as pronounced were fully realised:
- To provide an overview to the background of the project, the philosophy and structure of the programme and the pedagogical and didactical approach adopted
- To provide an insight into the two current modules of the MSc programme - Research Methodologies and Digital Media Applications
- To provide an overview of the associated research project: Open and Flexible Learning in Virtual Environments (OLIVE) research project
- To create an opportunity for interaction, dialogue and the sharing of experience as a learning community
- To extend the boundaries of the learning community (given the necessary conditions) to staff and students in Nijmegen via the use of ISDN videoconferencing

Discussion

The approach of the course is probably also useful to students of different disciplines to learn to participate in a multidiscipline team.
The expression ‘digital portfolio’ is not yet used in the same way. In the Netherlands it is more used for a student based set of work and assessment during a larger range of time. Here is the expression used for this course only. There was consensus about the kind of items in a portfolio. Students used a digital diary to sort out items for their portfolio.
The approach in the programme to overcome the cultural differences by a lot of communication (and social talk too) at the start, to bring up project proposes and to compile groups aided by tutors in both universities, had our full interest. We had an interesting discussion in Glasgow about the importance of a good start in a e-Learning group by social chat to socialise the members of this group. In the case of special moments or difficult discussions students and tutors use video conferencing.

Future plans

On the OLIVE research project the Dutch participants will provide SHU of Dutch comparing institute.
Experience on portfolios will be exchanged.
Alison will contact Dutch visitors at her next stay in the Netherlands.
IOWO (KUN) will share experiences on videoconference in e-Learning environment.

Hanzehogeschool will provide SHU of their experience in implementing Blackboard on a wide scale at a university of higher vocational education. Brian Hudson will seek contact to collect information in the Netherlands on this item and on integration of Blackboard with other systems. An exchange in experiences on software for children is appointed between ACTA and DMA participant.

MSc e-Learning Multimedia and Consultancy website: www.shu.ac.uk/msce-learning.

Implementing ICT Strategy

Author Pierre Gorissen, Fontys Hogescholen

Contact: John Stratford, Director, Gabi Diercks-O'Brien, Educational Advisor, Adrian Powell, Advisor-Producer

Theme: Policy and Planning

Summary

The Learning Media Unit's main role is to provide support to individual staff and their departments when introducing C&IT into teaching. This ranges from informal one-to-one advice to full-scale project support and production. The unit also offers a point of reference on the wider implications of introducing new elements into teaching, including help and advice with evaluation.
Two years ago three separate units (the Television Unit, the Distance Learning Unit and the Teaching & Learning Development Group) were joined together to form the Learning Media Unit. Aim was to improve the co-operation between the three units.

Implementing an L&T (Learning & Teaching) strategy within a university isn't easy. The academic ‘owns’ the course he/she teaches. They determine the structure etc. Both in the Netherlands and in the UK, at universities, research is still more important than teaching.

The university selected WebCT as their VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) in November 1998. There is no pressure to use the VLE; it was facilitated. They started with three projects that received considerable funding, instead of giving small amounts of money to a lot of projects. One of the goals was to find the strengths and weaknesses of WebCT. Starting September 2001 they started offering WebCT as a formal service for all. Within three months there were 10,000 registered students and more than 190 courses. The unit only supports this one VLE because supporting multiple applications isn't really possible (time/money). So far there haven't been any examples of courses that couldn't be supported by WebCT.
The first users were mainly power-users, but at the moment there also are a lot of novice users. Often they don't really know what to do with the VLE. In some cases they have seen a course using the VLE and want the same thing for their course. The Learning Media Unit then also helps them to 'translate' their existing course into a course that uses the VLE.
The Unit offers a lot of courses that are available for all staff-members of the university. They are attended not only by professors/academics but also by secretaries and other support staff members. Quite often they are the ones supporting the academics and thus also need to know about creating materials for use in the VLE.

Discussion

After the introduction of the Learning Media Unit by John Stratford the session quickly changed from a presentation into an interesting, rather informal round table discussion. The discussion concentrated on how to implement an ICT strategy, challenges and problems and the differences between the Netherlands and the UK. Though that means that there isn't a set of slides or a handout available for download, it was very interesting and allowed for true interaction during the session.

Website: www.shef.ac.uk/learningmedia

Student Portals

Author Bert Dasselaar, Hogeschool Alkmaar,Micha van Wijngaarden, SURF Educatie<F>

Contact: Paul Buckley, Head of IT Services, CIS, p.n.buckley@shu.ac.uk

Theme: Technology issues related to education

Summary

The Learning & Teaching Institute is a university wide institute. It focuses on IT technical skills and learning and teaching. Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) developed three years its strategy, which could be split up in three key components:

1. Learning Teaching Assessment (LTA) strategy
- flexible delivery
- support for a diversity of students
- appropriate use of technology ('appropriate' is a critical condition and means that it must contribute to primary process)

2. Information & IS strategy
- from a learning and teaching perspective. That means that Information & IS strategy is derived from LTA

3. Web strategy
- domain model: staff, students, visitors

The presentations mainly focused on the last strategy (web strategy), which includes the portal issue that will be elaborate later on.
It is important to avoid so-called portal wars about the question of ownership.

Portal
What is a portal:
- web interface
- accessible by browser (uncomplicated software)
- personalised environment
- providing data relevant to individual
- adaptive (intelligence)

SHU has three portals: for students, staff and visitors (inclusive alumni). Big part of the students and staff portal are public available. The new student portal will be launched at August 2002, but a preview is available at the PowerPoint slides.
The student portal mainly exists of the virtual learning environment (Blackboard) and the student Intranet which both has there specific functions.

Blackboard: Student intranet
LTA activities generic information
learning and teaching materials public
dynamic mostly static

For the future portals and web strategy would have these features:
- Blackboard would be the primary learning environment
- students will work with Blackboard everyday, everywhere
- single sign-on
- access to software & services
- link to other sites/portals (student intranet/corporate applications/library/information services)

Finally it would be preferable to create a Managed Learning Environment instead of a Virtual Learning Environment and other variety of components.

Advantages
Appropriate use of portals has many advantages.
Advantages for students:
- Users receive targeted information
- Access to all resources in one place
- Site structure can mirror School structure
- Consistent look and feel
- Simple and easy to use

Advantages for University:
- Information channel to student population
- Templates provided centrally - relieves design issues workload
- Content owned by Schools and departments
- Can be maintained either by School or department or centrally by CIS
- Clear process for publishing and updating information

Accessibility
Partly due to a new law about accessibility that will be ratified later this year accessibility is an important issue. Universities should have a proactive policy to meet the needs of those who are disabled (blindness, dyslexics, etc.). Therefore web content should be designed well and particular formats and standards should be used.
Miles Seecharan showed some examples of good and bad practices according to accessibility.

From a Marketing and Communication point of view Liz Collins pointed out some more details of goals and content of the student portal.

The Learning Centre

Author Frank Kresin, Digitale Universiteit, Hans Bronkhorst, Wageningen Universiteit

Contact: Graham Bulpitt, Sheffield Hallam University

Theme: Teaching and learning

Summary

After a short introduction about the university Graham Bulpitt, the director of the Learning Centre (LC) of the Sheffield Hallam University, talked about the realisation and the rationale behind the centre. It accommodates library and information services, computing facilities, a professional media studio, study facilities (both for groups and for individual students), a learning and teaching institute and a learning and teaching research institute. The building consists of seven floors, five of which are connected by means of a large open space, in which the students can work for 7x24 hours a week, if necessary in close harmony with the staff that is always visible behind glass walls.

The LC was developed as an answer to several developments in Higher Education in the early nineties: The student population doubled in size, finance was and continues to be dropping, the popular tendency to view students as customers, the shift towards life-long learning and the trend towards independent and resource based learning. At the same time, the university became aware of the potential of new technologies. Resources had to be bundled to accommodate the changes. The mission became: 'to become a dynamic environment which integrates provision to support a range of independent and group learning activities'.

Graham summarized the development as a change from structures to what students need. This change can be particularly threatening to the staff that might become lost in the process. To counter this threat, the LC had to become a place that allows for flexible projects but at the same time provides a secure working environment. Each staff member has a core competence that they are most proficient in, apart from that they are encouraged to build a profile in one of the other subjects. The centre has been very successful at this; it was awarded 'excellence' in the latest staff working environment survey.

The impact of the LC has been manifold: from improved academic performance to opening up opportunities for the less privileged. Media are used in a more integrated way and the facilities are in continuing high demand. An important aspect is that the learning did not become cheaper on a per student base; far more, the selling point is increased quality of the learning experience and results. For the tutors it has provided a better awareness of student expectations, a boost in participation in staff development programs and finally the introduction of the VLE, in this case BlackBoard. Figures in this last respect are not rocketing, as only 270 of a total of 5000 courses are 'BB enabled'.

After the presentation there was a short peek at the Sheffield Hallam student portal (www.shu.ac.uk/services/lc/students/index.html) that provides unified access to both paper and computer based resources. The integration with BlackBoard was shown; a key aspect was the change of one of the tabs (BlackBoard Resource Centre) to refer to the Sheffield Hallam Learning Centre portal. A minor change technically, but the connection of resources to the actual virtual learning environment proved to be fruitful. Also interesting is the development of an online tutorial on all aspects of the centre (including BB) in a BlackBoard course: the so-called InfoQuest tutorial. Tutors can adapt the tutorial on an individual basis to better suit their programs. The LC staff facilitates the tutors in this.

A short walk through the premises completed the presentation. During the walk there was ample time for further questions. For faculty staff the LC is often too far from their working environments. Only in special projects they come to discuss or work at the LC. As there are no lecture halls included in the building, there is no direct cause for staff to enter it. This has proved to be a barrier. Furthermore, when a lecturer needs computer participation of students, the open space at the LC is often not used, but instead a computer room somewhere else. Also here a form of distance to the centre existed. To bridge it, smaller centres have been created on the other locations at Sheffield Hallam University.

While strolling through the building we encountered a number of brochures on study skills. This approach seems to be interesting also for SURF members, since these brochures could be produced by several institutions working together; after all, the skills are fairly general. The LC showed interest in sharing them with us. A follow-up action has to be taken on this. More info about the brochures can be found on the web at students.shu.ac.uk/skillpacks.html.