Imaginative Curriculum Progress Report June 2002

Introduction

This report describes progress since the project was launched in January 2002. Key documents are located on project webpage www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre/projects/curriculum.

There are three elements to the project. The first is to consolidate knowledge about the curriculum and its design and improve access to this knowledge through the Generic Centre website. The work we do will create a framework for the continued development of this information. Progress in this part of the project is described under the heading website development. The second is to try to foster discussion about the idea of a curriculum and advance our understanding of what it means in contemporary HE. The third element is to understand how we can encourage HE institutions and ultimately subject communities to draw on the new resources and thinking. Progress in this area will be limited until we can show what the on-line resources will look like.

The Network

The network is central to shaping and achieving the project objectives. Malcolm Shaw has primary responsible for working with the network to develop ideas and content for the website. In June 2002 the Curriculum Network had nearly 80 members representing a range of constituencies including: staff and educational developers and others with an institutional role in aspects of curriculum development e.g. skills in the curriculum; educational researchers; tutors of postgraduate certificate teaching and learning courses and LTSN subject centre representatives. Communication is primarily through email. By mid June there will have been three meetings involving network members.

January 30th Network Meeting to discuss initial proposals and shape work plan
May 8th Meeting of tutors for PG Cert HE teaching and learning courses
June 17th Network Meeting – to review progress and consider creativity and the curriculum

Website development

Malcolm Shaw is primarily responsible for developing content for the website and mapping existing resources. The emphasis in this strand of the project is on producing information resources that will be useful to those who support curriculum development. The initial concept map for organising the website has been refined and a revised topic-based version has been circulated with a view to identifying colleagues willing to contribute to the development of content. Mapping of existing on-line and paper-based resources has been initiated and example web pages have been produced. We will make these available on a test site during the summer (probably late July). In the first instance we are going for simple introductory pages with downloadable rtf files. We are hoping to have a reasonable amount of content available on the test site in September. The principle audiences for the information will be :

- those with an institutional role in curriculum development and supporting curriculum review and validation processes;

- PG Cert HE teaching and learning course tutors and HE practitioners studying on teaching and learning courses.

Customization of this information, via subject centres, is a longer term aspiration.

PG Cert HE Teaching and Learning Course Tutors Strand

James Wisdom is responsible for coordinating the work in this strand of the project and developing content for the website in consultation with course tutors. Twenty two tutors volunteered to be involved and an initial meeting in York examined proposals and developed a forward plan that is currently being considered by this network.

Advancing thinking about the curriculum

Norman Jackson is responsible for this strand of the project. Initial work has focused on 1) the pressures for curriculum change 2) how we conceptualise the curriculum at both an academic generic level and at a practitioner level. In the case of the former we have produced a number of development papers and a number of colleagues in the network (including colleagues outside the UK) have contributed. In the case of the latter we have commissioned a number of research studies to find out what academics think. The work completed to date is summarised below

Development papers and network contributions March to June 2002

1. Pressures for curriculum change *Norman Jackson*
2. Conceptions and Visual Representations of the Curriculum *Norman Jackson & Malcolm Shaw* with important contributions from curriculum network - John Biggs (Aus), Peter Knight, John Stephenson, Maggi Sabbin-Baden, Alan Jenkins, Paul Tosey, Liz Dunne, Tim Riorden (USA), Bob Farmer.
3. The Idea of a Creative Curriculum *Peter Knight*

Commissioned Research to inform discussion and website development

CURRICULUM DESIGN MARKET RESEARCH : what do academics do when they design courses?

- Viv Anderson Leeds Metropolitan University
- Martin Oliver University College London
- Ranald McDonald Sheffield Hallam University

CREATIVITY AND CURRICULUM DESIGN: What do academics think?

- Chris McGoldrich Liverpool John Moores University
- Martin Oliver University College London
- Jo Tait Open University - What conditions and environment could support teachers in finding space for 'creativity' in their work with curriculum?

Encouraging use of the web-based resources

Our market research shows that there is little in the way of a culture of academics accessing websites to enhance their knowledge about aspects of teaching such as curriculum design. Understanding how we can encourage the development of this culture in the context of the project is an important focus for our learning. A number of suggestions were made at the first network meeting some of which we have followed up.

We agree with suggestions at the first network meeting that academics have to be encouraged and guided to use web-based resources by embedding such guidance in institutional policies, design and review processes and opportunities for learning. During the autumn, when we have some on-line resources to draw upon, we will explore this with the network. A longer term view of cultural development must be related to the development of

tutors through their initial preparation for teaching and continuing development of professional knowledge and skills. In response to suggestions made at the first network meeting we have established a second network for course tutors who are responsible for PG Cert HE teaching and learning courses. Twenty two tutors are involved in the network and James Wisdom (educational consultant) is facilitating development work.

We are also planning to examine how institutions support curriculum development.

Project Conference

We are planning to celebrate and raise awareness of the results of our work through a national conference on November 4th at the Centre Point Conference Centre in London. The theme of the conference is Constructive Alignment in action. The theory was developed by Professor John Biggs and it underlies the thinking for curriculum design within the QAA policy framework. The conference will provide an opportunity to consider the connections, synergies and tensions between educational and organisational theory, policy and practice and to review research evidence for the impacts of the idea on HE teachers and student learning. It will also provide an opportunity for institutional managers, change agents and policy makers to reflect on the realities of alignment in a world of complexity.

Draft programme for November 4th

- Aligning the curriculum to promote good learning : the idea and ideals of constructive alignment
  Professor John Biggs, educational consultant Australia
- An introduction to constructive alignment through QAA policy
  Dr Norman Jackson, LTSN Generic Centre and University of Surrey
- Promoting alignment through programme specifications and subject benchmarks
  Dr Warren Houghton, University of Exeter and LTSN Engineering Subject Centre
- Curriculum alignment in contemporary UK higher education: a research perspective
  Professor Dai Hounsell, University of Edinburgh
- Constructive alignment in the world of institutional management
  Professor Rob Cuthbert, Deputy Vice Chancellor University of the West of England

THANK YOU

The project team would like to thank all the members of the network for your interest and involvement in the project. We would like to say a special thank you to all of you who have provided written contributions, or contributed to the email discussions or volunteered to help develop content for the website.

Project team
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