PRESSURES FOR CURRICULUM CHANGE
Norman Jackson

what the paper is about

This is the first of a series of papers produced for the LTSN *Imaginative Curriculum* project aimed at developing knowledge about the curriculum in contemporary higher education. It does not set out to review the literature on this theme. Rather it tries to draw on and draw in the perceptions and experiential learning (tacit knowledge) of knowledgeable practitioners.

This paper focuses on the pressures for change and seeks to provide an overview of the main pressures for change. The Imaginative Curriculum project is founded on the belief that designing a curriculum is a creative act and pressures, far from suppressing the spirit and imagination of academics, provide constant stimulus for creativity. We want to celebrate and demonstrate the fact that creativity lies at the heart of the teaching enterprise and the enrichment of student learning and their experiences of learning.

invitation to contribute

You are invited to provide specific examples of the ways in which your course or institution is responding to some of these pressures. Examples will be pooled to provide a resource to underpin the imaginative curriculum website. The template below is intended to simplify the process of responding. Please don't let it constrain you. An open response will be valued also. The project team is particularly interested in how academic colleagues understand how creativity is involved in making change. This will feed into a large scale survey being undertaken within the project.

CONTRIBUTION TO LTSN GENERIC CENTRE IMAGINATIVE CURRICULUM PROJECT
Name
Institution
Subject or other identifier
External pressure(s) reflected in case study
Context
What you did to change
What you feel was creative about what you did
Commentary (impacts)

Please email to: M.Shaw@lmu.ac.uk (or gcenquiries@ltsn.ac.uk after September 1 2002)

Pressures translate into change

We live in a time of constant and messy change and we are all under pressure to change what we are doing. This pressure derives in part from the professional expectation that we will all try to improve our own practice in response to self-critical evaluation. The assumption is that we will seek to model our own practice on what is considered within our peer group to be good practice. This is essentially self-imposed pressure to change but there are also a host of external pressures created by new expectations or demands.

We often use the term 'enhancement' to cover all sorts of changes that lead to improvement but the idea of improvement is often contested by the individuals who have been forced to change their practice (see public debate at www.ltsn.ac.uk/enhancement) . The changes we associate with enhancement can mean many things for example,

- Abandoning something that is not working
- Doing existing things better / more efficiently
- Making better use of something
- Adding new things to existing things
- Connecting things to make different things
- Doing entirely new things which replace or complement existing things

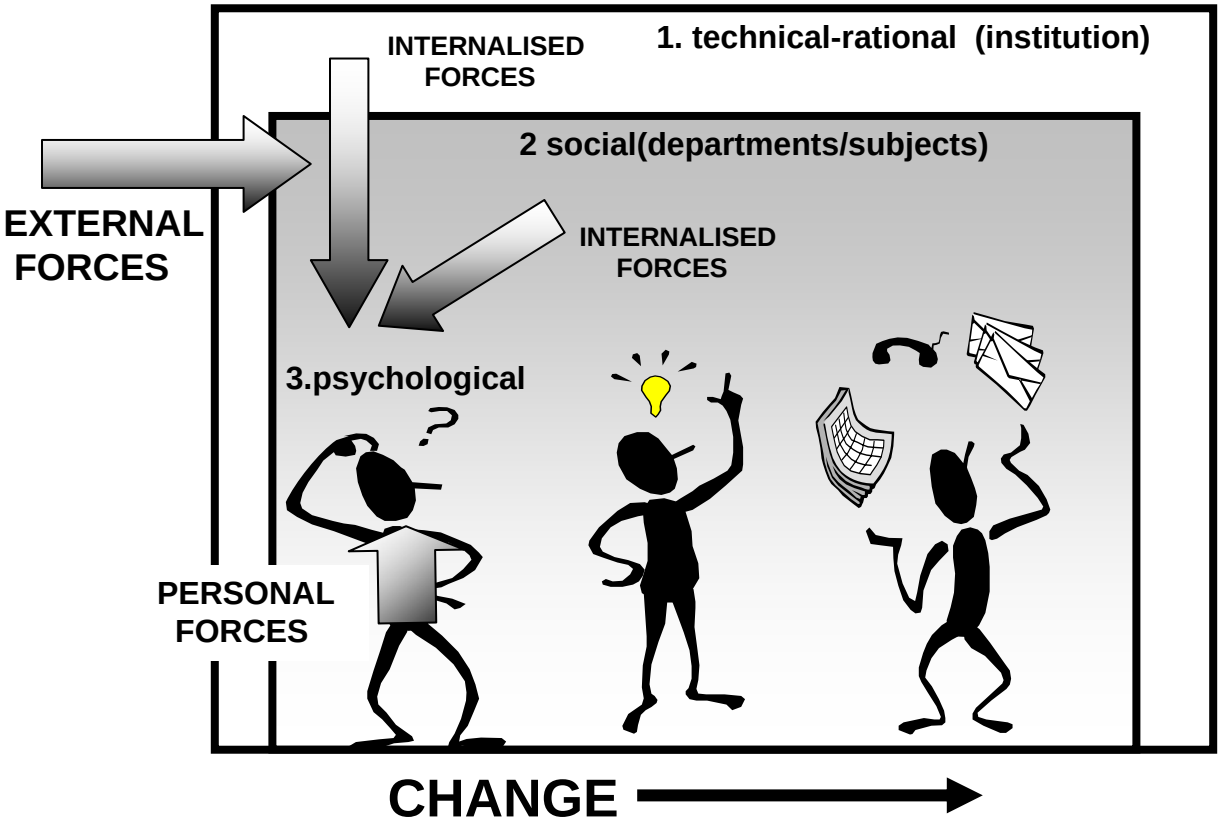
Change is an infinitely complex thing and each of us constructs our own understanding of the world of change within the social and intellectual contexts in which we work. All too often our world of change is characterised by stress and overwork, conflicting demands and competing priorities (research, teaching and administration). Our perceptions on the reasons for change and its management (or non management!) together with personal beliefs, ambitions and attitudes to change are a major determinant of how each of us enact change within our practice community. Change is the product of the interactions between management interventions, culture and personal beliefs and attitudes to change. Because it is so complex we rarely try to develop a systematic and collective view of how it happens.

This paper acknowledges the bewildering complexity of change but tries to explore changes relating to the HE curriculum using a conceptual framework based on the idea that change is a response to one or more forces. The idea will be tested and refined by working with HE communities through a network of practitioners. The approach has the potential to be extended to other aspects of higher education and it is being undertaken within the knowledge brokerage role of the Generic Centre's brokerage role.

A simple working model of change in HE institutions

In any consideration of change it is important to explain the assumptions about the way change happens. Notwithstanding the acknowledged complexity of change, Figure 1 offers a simple working model that can be tested and refined or completely modified through the process of discussion outlined above (the background and thinking to this model is described at (see also Complexity and messiness of change at www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre/for-SCs/brokerage.asp)

Figure 1 A model of change within an HE institution



The model identifies three different environments for change and influences on change in HE institutions. Many change initiatives in HE institutions are driven by technical-rational thinking and strategies embedded in management structures and interventions. Substantial planned changes related to teaching and learning will be set out in institutional or departmental Strategies for Learning and Teaching or annual operational plans. Institutional change strategies are propagated through management and committee structures, procedural and regulatory frameworks. They may be supported formally by dedicated resources and expertise (eg by staff or educational development units) or staff may be left to 'get on with it' with little or no additional resources or professional support. Monitoring of implementation may be through regulatory processes (like curriculum review), management processes (like an annual review) or enquiry-based surveys and audits. Large scale change relating to learning and teaching that is propagated through this rational view of the world is aligned to the educational missions and business plans of institutions.

The actually changes on the ground are enacted at the micro level by each individual operating in one of many department or sub-department cultures and social groupings (sub department groupings include strongly networked sub-disciplines and / or course teams). This is the organic world of change – it is complex and less predictable than the technical-rational world. An important dimension of this organic world is the personal and collective psychology's (world

views and attitudes to change) of every individual in it. Perceptions on the reasons for change and its management and leadership, together with personal beliefs, ambitions and attitudes to change are a major determinant of how change is enacted by each individual and practice community. External forces for change may trigger responses at one or more of these three 'levels' (institutional, departmental/sub-departmental and individual). These external forces interact with and are complemented by self-determined change driven by individuals or small social groups.

Ultimately, change in HE boils down to the way individuals interpret and respond. This is the point of creativity in the curriculum, in teaching and assessment, in support and guidance, in providing information and resources to support learning.

Traditional and emergent curricula

The word curriculum originates from the Latin for race course. Its meaning evolved to mean any course and eventually a course that is studied. In education it is associated with the way knowledge and the learning process are organised and traditionally academics determined this and groups of students all studied the same course or curriculum.

This conception of a curriculum as organised knowledge and learning is still recognised by many academics in 2001 and is more or less valid at least for knowledge-based curricula. But with the advent of mass HE and modularisation the conception of curriculum is assuming new meanings around the idea of self-contained packages (modules/units) of knowledge and learning actions that can be assembled in various ways to create a range of courses or programmes. This conception means that students can customise the curriculum to varying degrees according to their interests and needs. Most contemporary curricula are therefore partly controlled by academics and partly determined by students. However, in our consumer-led society there are emerging situations in which people determine what they study, how they study and when they study ie they determine their own curriculum. Although this curriculum may not automatically lead to a certificated award it is normally recognised through credit. There is also the emergence of process-led learning for example where people create their own curriculum and learning opportunities through their work activities according to a set of principles and with reference to a set of constructs.

Barnett et al (1999) suggested that these structural and conceptual changes are accompanied by an evolutionary change that can be conceptualised around the idea of performity 'curricula are likely to exhibit a transformation crudely from student subjectivities oriented around knowing to those oriented around doing. (Barnett et al 1999).

Context for curriculum change

UK HE is intimately connected to the society which hosts it and increasingly to the global society. A society which is awash with information, which is growing knowledge at an exponential rate and which is increasingly connected through advances in technology. A society in which the notion of citizenship has been eroded and confused. A consumer-based society with ever increasing and sometimes unrealistic expectations of its public services. One which supports ever increasing accountability of its professional workforces – particularly its teachers and doctors. A world of employment that expects people to be infinitely adaptable and flexible: where most people will experience radical changes in their work, will be periodically made redundant and be unemployed and have to pick up the pieces and change direction repeatedly.

A world in which people who cannot cope with, adapt to and exploit change, will be very unhappy. This is not a world we would necessarily choose to live in but it is the real world for our students.

The Government cannot control change that is driven by forces beyond its control but it can promote change that will, in its view, make the educational system more attuned to the needs of the dynamic society it represents. We know that this is a messy and chaotic process. The combination of intervention and market forces applied to a more or less autonomous professional HE system produces a bewilderingly complex, often conflicting package of change incentives and responses. Academics are often required to interpret the implications of these forces and implement changes sometimes with little support or guidance on how to do it. The changes required often conflict with what we believe is right as educationalists, scientists, artists or whatever we think we are. We are constantly having to confront ethical dilemmas brought about by the intersection of forces of change with our personal beliefs and values. And this causes stress, discomfort and unease.

The LTSN view is that surfacing these tensions is an important first step ***in defining the problems in order to progress thinking and identify practical solutions*** in such a complex social system.
Our strategy is to try to harness some of the enormous creative and intellectual energy in our academic communities to grow, through our brokerage role, a better understanding of the problems and issues facing HE communities and identify through collaboration, solutions to the problems as they are perceived on the ground. The thematic problem in this particular brokerage strategy can be expressed as a two-part research question. ***What are the pressures for change and how are HE communities changing the curriculum under the influence of these forces?*** It is often in these 'problem solving' areas brought about by enforced change that real innovation and progressive ideas emerge.

To stimulate discussion, a number of forces for change are proposed together with illustrations of the ways in which HE has responded at whole system, institution or individual practitioner levels. These cannot be isolated. They all interact, some are in conflict and responses often address more than one force. The imaginative curriculum project will attempt to evaluate the extent to which these forces and perceived responses are real or imagined.

Examples of external pressures for change

1. **Concern for academic standards**
2. **Professionalisation of teaching**
3. **Skills for the knowledge economy and employability**
4. **Use of communications and information technology**
5. **Learning through life and development of self**
6. **The market**
7. **Democratising / popularising HE**
8. **Doing more with less**

Self-determined Change

Like any population of professional workers, academic practitioners will occupy a spectrum from people who are continually seeking to improve and develop themselves to people who are content to remain as they are. That is not to necessarily imply that the latter need to improve

their practice but to define an attitude to self-motivated change. Between these two extremes their will be many academics who will be self-motivated to improve an aspect of their practice if they are inspired to do so. So the key question here is what fires the imagination of such individuals?

The motivation to improve own practice is deeply personal and arises from an individual's enthusiasm and passion for a subject and a desire to see students learn and develop. At the level of the teacher scholar it is often the growth of personal knowledge in the subject, particularly if it derives from personal research, that drives self-motivated curriculum change.

Studies in the UK and Australia show that the massive changes to work contexts that resulted from systemic changes in the first half of the 1990's have created a generally unfavourable environment for self-motivated change. In spite of these unfavourable conditions there is still a considerable commitment to self-determined change because academics derive satisfaction from being creative and improving the learning experience of their students.

It is acknowledged that the totality of self-determined change is enormous and difficult to quantify. This paper focuses on the external pressures for change.

External pressures for change

FORCE 1

CONCERN FOR ACADEMIC STANDARDS

The rapid expansion of UK HE drive surfaced a long standing major issue about the comparability of academic standards in a diverse, multipurpose, mass system. The standards agenda is essentially about accountability in a diverse mass system. It adopts a predominantly technical-rational view of standards (rather than an organic social view) and advocates a managed systems approach to construction and specification. A whole system approach is promoted through policies on programme specification / subject benchmarking /codes of practice and institutional policies like level descriptors and module specifications. In some subject areas Statutory Regulatory and Professional Bodies exert a strong influence on standards and the conditions for attainment.

There is also a social view of standards that is concerned with justice, fairness and equity of student achievement. Society also believes that it is right that the dimensions of standards (the learning that underpins them) is not just the preserve of the academy. The ongoing debates about skills vs knowledge, content vs process and the generic vs subject are a manifestation of the social influence on standards. Taken to its logical conclusion, in areas such as health, the purchaser of the training and education (eg Department of Health) can dictate some of the parameters for standards. This is where the standards force interacts with market and skills for employability forces.

DRIVERS: OVERTLY DRIVEN BY GOVERNMENT THROUGH QAA POLICY FRAMEWORK, STATUTORY REGULATORY BODIES AND PROFESSIONAL BODIES. EVERY HEI IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS THE STANDARDS OF ITS AWARDS. WHILE THE MORAL PURPOSE MIGHT BE SUPPORTED BY SOCIETY THE SYSTEM-WIDE POLICIES FOR ACHIEVING ACCOUNTABILITY MAY BE CONTESTED AND MAY RESULT IN A CULTURE OF COMPLIANCE.

HE RESPONSES

- System-wide move to outcomes based learning but many interpretations of how it should be applied
- Emphasis on specifying learning (as well as knowledge) in module and programme specifications
- Encouragement for a systematic constructivist approach to curriculum design through programme specification and to view the learning outcomes from a curriculum holistically (ie attempt to overcome reductionist thinking that the focus on modules promotes). *But many academics only see their subject rather than the programme - it may only be seen holistically by course/programme leaders and the students.*
- The rise of subject benchmarking and other referencing processes to demonstrate how intended learning relates to external views of what learning should be (benchmarking information / levels descriptors).
- Assessment becoming increasingly more complex and the driver for learning. *But this driver is being countered by the need to simplify assessment as class sizes increase and as fears for plagiarism increase in more coursework based assessment regimes.*
- Redesign of curriculum review and validation processes; new support and guidance strategies for academics.

CURRICULUM RESPONSES

- Curricula designed as a series of module/unit building blocks with clear specification for knowledge-base and learning expressed as intended outcomes or objectives, with increasing focus on the connection between outcomes and assessment.
- Recent encouragement to show how module level learning is connected through curriculum maps to the overall intended learning for a programme.
- Design processes that are guided by various sorts of reference materials produced and agreed collectively by practitioner communities.

FORCE 2 PROFESSIONALISATION OF TEACHING

There is an assumption in this force that HE subject specialists are not experts in the practice of education as well. Those driving this force (agencies, HE institutions, and the ILT) argue that: 1) it would be good thing if we professionalise HE teaching by ensuring that all HE teachers have opportunities to develop their knowledge and practice skills and maintain these through CPD and 2) gain accreditation through an appropriate professional body.

This force is manifest in the QAA Subject Assessment which grades aspects of teaching and learning practice and curriculum design in each department (this information then feeds into the Market Force in the form of league tables). It is also driven by the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund and the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme. It embraces incentives to a more planned approach to managing and supporting teaching and learning. For example through: 1) institutional missions and learning and teaching strategies and policies at institution and departmental levels; 2) institutional schemes that reward innovative and good teachers 3) committee structures that support TLA; 4) institutional support for staff development and professional accreditation 5) the systematised approach to curriculum design promoted by QAA policies and codes of practice, 6) subject-based research and development activities such as those promoted by LTSN subject centres and 7) the sponsorship of practitioner networks that seek to promote improvement.

It is also manifest in the increased resources allocated to Research Councils (ESRC) TLRP3 building research capacity in T&L in HE and the promotion of research into evidenced based practice.

DRIVERS PROMOTED BY GOVERNMENT THROUGH FUNDING COUNCIL STRATEGIES AND THE INSTITUTE FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING AND IMPLICITLY IN THE ACTIVIIES OF THE LEARNING AND TEACHING SUPPORT NETWORK AND ESRC FUNDED ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

HE RESPONSES

- Institutions provide expertise and development opportunities to support curriculum review and design processes
- Institutional policies and guidance to promote high standards in curriculum design including involvement of external peers in evaluating curriculum design.
- Evidence of curriculum design skills required for ILT accreditation
- Programme specification to encourage more systematic curriculum design processes and use of frameworks by course teams
- QAA sponsored peer review examines curriculum design
- ESRC funding to promote research into HE TLA/curriculum
- More systematic training and development to encouragement for teaching staff to be more aware of how students learn in order to design curricula that will promote deeper learning

CURRICULUM RESPONSES

- Should be manifest in more considered curricular design founded on sound educational principles and informed by educational research.
- Explicit policies and strategies that guide practice in curriculum design
- Systematic gathering of student feedback on information on courses/modules analysis and evaluation and use in changing the curriculum
- External 'consultancy' type support provided by many institutions through staff and educational developers to curriculum review teams

FORCE 3

SKILLS FOR THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND EMPLOYABILITY

The social imperative argues that people need to be equipped with the capacities and behaviors to survive and thrive in the modern world. The economic imperative argues that we need a highly skilled workforce that can cope with and adapt to continuous change. This force sees education as instrumental and argues that students need to be aware of this world and develop skills and behaviors that will enable them to plan and manage their careers, adapting to new situations and transferring their learning to different work contexts. They may need to be able to work in more collaborative and interdisciplinary ways. They need to be able to find, process and communicate information and knowledge quickly (see also below).

DRIVERS OVERTLY DRIVEN BY THE AGENCIES OF GOVERNMENT (DfEE/DfES/DTI/QAA) IN COLLABORATION WITH EMPLOYERS AND THEIR ASSOCIATIONS WITH STUDENT SUPPORT. MORAL PURPOSE SUPPORTED BY SOCIETY BUT THE EFECTS MAY BE CONTESTED WHEN THE EFFECTS IMPACT ON DISCIPLINARY CONCERNS AND INTERESTS.

HE RESPONSES

- Numerous surveys of what employers need and want
- DfES/DTI and EU funding (eg EHE, Innovations) to raise awareness of skills agenda and encourage HEIs to change / develop new practice
- Curriculum designers and HE institutions conscious of the need to develop and assess generic skills and skills to enhance student employability
- System-wide move to outcomes based learning emphasises what students should be able to do ie the application of knowledge through practical, intellectual or generic skill.
- Module and programme specification spell out what skills will be developed through the curriculum.
- Subject benchmark statements set out the types of skill base that might be developed through study in a subject.
- Other forms of disciplinary based specification eg professional standards also set out skills base and competencies required for practice
- Systematisation of occupational competency standards. *Not used very much in academic curricula.*
- Increased awareness and use of extra curricular activities to practice and evidence skills*. Not used very much in academic curricula.*

- Increasing involvement of employers as consultants in curriculum review and design processes particularly in more innovative inter- multi-disciplinary areas.
- In some professional areas - creating curriculum opportunities for inter-professional learning.
- Consideration of the above in curriculum review and validation processes.
- Creation of new support and guidance strategies and tool kits for curriculum designers.
- In some institutions - careers education entitlements and the delivery of careers guidance in the context of the academic curriculum.
- Increasing capacity and support to recognise and accredit in the context of HE curricular prior experiential work-based learning.
- New institutions helping people in work to learn e-university, Ufi and NHS University.

CURRICULUM RESPONSES

- Increasing focus on generic skills in the curriculum at the expense of subject knowledge and / or greater recognition and awareness of how academic curriculum provide opportunities for the development of generic skills.
- Curriculum mapping and student profiling to raise awareness of how curriculum developing employability and generic skills.
- New approaches to curriculum design eg Foundation Degrees, Competency Based Degrees, Negotiated Work-Based Learning where learning is directly related to the work place and employability skills.
- Partnerships with companies and the design of programmes that are customised for a particular company.
- Accreditation of in-company courses.
- Increasing opportunities for students to gain work experience that is relevant to their programme of study in either a specific or generic sense.
- Institutional policies on key/transferable skills influence curriculum design. Various skill combinations and approaches used – integrated versus bolt on.
- Increasing opportunity for developing capability in the use of C&IT
- Increasing curriculum opportunities for people in work to learn while they are in the workplace - eg bite sized chunks, small qualifications, on-line learning, negotiated work-based learning.

FORCE 4

USING COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

This force is one that is changing the world as we speak. It is driven by an urgency to utilise C&IT to facilitate student learning and a number of ideologies: 1) that we are in competition with the world to exploit the technology therefore our students need to be fully engaged with it 2) the belief that ultimately it will enable the costs of education to be reduced 3) that it will facilitate access to higher education for people who cannot otherwise gain access and therefore 4) it opens up new markets 5) it provides opportunities for innovation in learning. It is supported by massive state investment in technical and support infrastructure and driven through institutional strategic plans. The pressure is on staff to exploit the technology in the teaching and learning process to become more efficient and to provide students with increasing opportunity to develop their IT related skills.

DRIVERS OVERTLY DRIVEN BY THE STATE (DfEE/DfES/DTI/FUNDING COUNCILS, JISC, LTSN, UFI & E-UNIVERSITY AND UUK, HEIs) SUPPORTED AND DRIVEN BY FUNDED INITIATIVES, PRACTITIONER NETWORKS (eg ALT network) AND THE GLOBAL SOCIETY.

HE RESPONSES

- Massive investment in C&IT at both system level and institutional levels
- Funded C&IT initiatives (TLTP, CIT, FDTL in part)
- National JISC committee structure for driving and funding infrastructure
- New internet-based organisations (Ufi and E-university)
- Creation of Distributed National Electronic Resource (DNER) to enable a wide range of curriculum content to be accessed via JANET

CURRICULUM RESPONSES

- Creation of virtual learning environments to support T&L and opportunities for learning through the VLE integrated into curriculum design.
- Increasing opportunity for C&IT-based learning within the curriculum enormous number of innovations relating to provision of knowledge, support and guidance, interactive learning, assessment,
- Curriculum management eg tools for mapping skills and permitting students to manage their own programmes.

FORCE 5

DEMOCRATISATION AND POPULARISATION OF HE

The social imperative has been to 1) grow opportunities for learning in higher education quickly, 2) increase substantially the participation rate of the age cohort and adult learners engaged in higher education so that more people might have more life choices 3) address the moral principle of equality of opportunity 4) view people as consumers with rights and entitlements and to be consulted in the design of courses.

DRIVERS: OVERTLY DRIVEN BY GOVERNMENT THROUGH FUNDING COUNCIL EXPANSION, ACCESS & WIDENING PARTICIPATION POLICIES. THE MORAL PURPOSE GENERALLY SUPPORTED BY SOCIETY BUT CLEARLY IN TENSION WITH THE WIDELY HELD VIEW THAT THE PROCESS HAS REDUCED STANDARDS.

HE RESPONSES

- Massification of higher education
- Radical re-organisation of the curriculum, deliver and support mechanisms to accommodate mass HE
- Marketing through subtle differentiation of curricula that are very similar through differentiated titling
- Partnerships with FE institutions to facilitate access to curriculum in multiple sites
- Institutional policies on access for disabled: accessibility standards for on-line learning materials *(probably still marginal in many HEIs).*
- Regulatory structures and learner support mechanisms that encourage internal transfer between courses rather than drop out
- Student feedback at module and unit level
- Involvement of students in curriculum evaluation processes. *But still really only at a module/unit level and focusing on teaching/inputs rather than learning*
- Alumni surveys.

CURRICULUM RESPONSES

- Modularisation and unitisation of the curriculum and structuring in semesters. *It is possible that there has been some regression from idealised modular structures to more controlled structures and in some institutions a shift from 'short fat' to 'long thin' units.*
- Almost universal use of credit for assessed learning tied to modules/units (concomitant standardisation of regulatory structures).
- Creation of new access routes (access courses, foundation, co-designed HND-degrees, top-up other, summer schools…..)
- Redesign of entry level courses to accommodate more diverse intakes
- Increasing use of on-line and other forms of distance learning
- Progressive opening up of curriculum design to scrutiny and constructive criticism from students (present and occasionally past), employers and peers.

FORCE 6 LEARNING THROUGH LIFE AND LEARNING FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CITIZENSHIP

There is much rhetoric around this composite package of forces. Few would argue that creating a society which places high value on learning for all sorts of reasons at all stages in life is not a good thing. Or that education is not only about changing a

person's view of the world in a subject sense but about the development of the whole person. Or that a healthy society is one with a shared understanding of the meaning of citizenship and a commitment to civic responsibilities. But translating these into curriculum actions is perhaps more problematic than some of the other areas for change.

DRIVERS IMPLICITLY SUPPORTED BY GOVERNMENT (DfEE/DfES/ DEARING, FRYER AND KENNEDY REVIEWS) THE MORAL PURPOSE IS SUPPORTED BY SOCIETY.

HE RESPONSES

- Increased flexibility of modular curriculum to permit dipping in by associate students
- Traditional continuing education type provision reframed in terms of academic credit often structured within combined or open studies courses
- Increased opportunity for off-campus learning
- Policy driven encouragement to systematise the idea of personal development planning
- Increasing awareness and use of extra curricula activities to support personal development and the development of an appreciation of the idea of citizenship eg student volunteering, student representative or officer work, part-time work, modules in citizenship
- Increasing capacity for students to customise their negotiated learning through learning contracts.
- Increasing curricular opportunities geared to the CPD needs of professionals
- Creation of new types of institution to support LLL eg e-university and Ufi

CURRICULUM RESPONSES

- Strategies to improve student autonomy/independence in learning and the overall capacity of people to learn in different contexts.
- Design of curricula to foster reflective learning and planning for personal development to promote greater self awareness.
- Increasing curriculum opportunities for people in work to learn while they are in the workplace - eg bite sized chunks, small qualifications, on-line learning, negotiated work-based learning.
- Open studies programmes to provide opportunities for adult learners to study without enrolling on qualification-bearing programme
- Increasing capacity and support to recognise and accredit prior experiential work-based learning.

FORCE 7

THE MARKET

This force connects HE in a fundamental way to the needs and aspirations of society. Government policies driven through the Funding Council's funding formulae combined with : 1) the introduction of private contributions to tuition fees and 2) the rhetoric of consumerism and customer rights to information and service quality, have

progressively moved the higher learning market in the direction of greater accountability and responsiveness to student choices. Changes in the perceptions of the public of what HE is for (eg to get a well paid job), and what are perceived to be areas of growth in the job market or conversely areas that people find less attractive have a significant impact on the potential markets for courses. Increasing competition with entry of new providers into the marketplace adds further stress. Where employers are the market eg Department of Health / NHS Trusts they have a major influence on the curriculum as purchasers of training.

DRIVERS SUCCESSIVE GOVERNMENTS THROUGH FUNDING COUNCIL POLICIES, INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDENT FEE ELEMENT, THE RHETORIC OF CONSUMERISM AND CITIZENS CHARTERS AND THE DRIVE FOR CLEARER INFORMATION TO INFORM MARKET DECISIONS. SUPPORTED BY FEE PAYING STUDENTS AND PARENTS.

HE RESPONSES

- Modular, flexible curricula that permit construction of many different programmes with subtly different content and attractive marketable titles.
- Greater attention to marketing. Provision of information both descriptive promotional and validated information on quality and standards
- Strategies to widen access and increase participation
- Creation of new players (like Ufi) to stimulate new markets (people in the workplace).
- Increasing vocationalism of courses
- Greater involvement of students in the formal structures and processes of the institution. Important informants of the quality/appropriateness of the curriculum.
- Increasing concern for student autonomy and independence seen as a response to economic imperatives with attendant increase in concerns for student learning styles and needs diagnosis on entry followed by attempts to provide adaptable and flexible/ customised curricular choices
- A careful and welcome focus on and concern for student appeals, complaints and grievance procedures.
- The marketing of courses to overseas students and development of operations in other countries

CURRICULUM RESPONSES

- Growth of new inter and multidisciplinary programmes that can address niche employment markets
- Increasing emphasis on employability skills to demonstrate that any subject can provide a route to employment.
- Changes to curriculum to accommodate changes in pre-HE curriculum
- Increasing concerns for student learning styles and needs diagnosis on entry followed by customised support to meet needs
- Curriculum partnerships between providers to share and grow the market together

- In areas where employers or Professional Bodies have a strong influence on the market reformulating the curriculum in response to their interests (eg inter-professional education in health)
- The growth of customised and personalised curricula which are partly or completely negotiated against a student's own objectives and interests. (Independent study modules and schemes, Learning Contracts mixed mode learning including work-based learning and other forms of experiential learning).
- The abandonment of courses that consistently fail to attract students.

FORCE 8

DOING MORE WITH LESS

While the overall investment in higher education has significantly increased, unit resources (funding levels for each student taught) have decreased significantly in order to finance the expansion. Institutions have been successful in making efficiency gains but these have been achieved in ways that many academics would feel have compromised their ability to provide the quality of education and support that they would like to achieve. It has resulted in a range of responses around cost effective and efficient methods for operating and delivering courses.

DRIVERS SUCCESSIVE GOVERNMENTS THROUGH FUNDING COUNCIL POLICIES

HE RESPONSES

- A more managed cost conscious approach to providing education in which commercial viability is an important consideration in the decision making processes relating to curriculum development and offer.
- Concomitant reductions of academic autonomy in order to comply with the administrative systems used to manage provision.
- Ways of organising and managing the curriculum (modularisation/unitization) that permit more students to be taught without increasing the contact time of staff and more students to utilise the available resources.
- Acceptance of a swing from emphasising teaching (which is what most staff value) to learning (which used to be almost marginal).
- Reductions in class contact in favour of teaching methods that promote student independence, etc
- A rise in student induction into the methods of used in cost-effective course delivery and increased student autonomy, independence, negotiation and influence within the curriculum, surprisingly coupled with mass lectures – strange bedfellows!
- Increased use of contracted part-time staff and the concentration of course administration on fewer full-time staff.
- Increasing bureaucracy involved in course management.

CURRICULUM RESPONSES

- Modularisation and unitisation of the curriculum
- Standardisation of the model of learning (based on outcomes)

- Increasing use of resource-based learning to support independent study
- Reductions in expensive experiential learning like field work
- Increasing use of computer-based simulation rather than experimentation that might use expensive equipment or consumables.
- Increasing emphasis on student autonomy.

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