

Learning from internal change academy processes : final report

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Supporting and Leading Educational Change



Learning from Internal Change Academy Processes

Final Report

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 **Sheffield
Hallam University**

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Further copies of the report

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Introduction

How the report is structured

The report is divided into 3 main sections: an introduction and background to the project including the methodology; a five part summary of findings; and three appendices. It explains the rationale for this project on learning from internal change academy (ICA) processes, highlights common themes from a benchmarking exercise and discusses interesting approaches at a number of institutions. It also draws out areas of good practice which will be of benefit to other institutions considering an internal change academy.

An annotated bibliography on educational change is a companion document to this report. As a requirement of the funding the authors have a session at the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) Spring conference in Brighton in May 2009.

Background to the project

Sheffield Hallam University was awarded a SEDA Research and Development Grant in March 2008 to undertake a project entitled 'Learning from Internal Change Academy Processes'.

In the past few years a number of institutions have used internal change academies to build capacity for and understanding of leading and supporting educational change. Our interest in researching the impact of internal change academies grew out of a decision to run such a programme, having previously sent a team to the National Change Academy programme in 2006. At Sheffield Hallam we are now in the second year of running our own internal change academy known as *Shared Futures*, a process we see as forming part of a complex approach to implementing and evaluating the institution's Learning Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Strategy.

The rationale for this project was that it will enable the enhanced understanding of how the various internal change models are impacting on institutions, and will make a valuable contribution to the developing literature relating to contemporary concepts of leading educational change within LTA.

The National Change Academy

In partnership with the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) the Higher Education Academy has run a national Change Academy programme since 2004. *"Change Academy is a year-long programme of support for teams from higher education institutions that enables them to develop the knowledge, capacity and enthusiasm for achieving complex institutional change. It provides unique opportunities for team-based learning and professional development that focus on the strategic interests and needs of the participating institutions."* (HEA, 2009).The

process involves two 24 hour events with team leaders, a 4 day residential, and institutional visits by members of the national Change Academy team. Further information, resources and a list of participating institutions is available from the [HEA website](#).

Approach and outputs

The main body of the project comprises:

- a simple benchmarking¹ exercise involving interviews with other institutions running internal change academies (in England and Wales); and,
- an annotated bibliography focusing on contemporary approaches to leading educational change within LTA.

The principal project outputs are:

- this report and a companion bibliography;
- a set of statements on areas of good practice in leading educational change through internal change academies; and,
- a professional development event (January 2009) to facilitate sharing and future collaboration between institutions involved in the benchmarking exercise and other interested parties.

Project aims

Our main intention is a comprehensive and shared understanding of how institutions have taken the concept of internal change academies to enhance greater insight into the *process* of leading educational change: principally achieved through a benchmarking exercise and annotated bibliography.

The findings in this report will help the individual institutions involved reflect on their own position in relation to achieving local change and will also be of interest to colleagues in educational development units more widely. Appendix 1 of this report identifies areas of good practice from the benchmarking exercise which institutions can use to aid reflection and self assessment in relation to leading educational change. The work has also contributed to the evaluation of Sheffield Hallam University's internal change academy, *Shared Futures*.

¹ Benchmarking in this context means a process for self-evaluation which provides a better understanding of practice and process and which generates insights into how improvements and innovations might be made.

The professional development event hosted by Sheffield Hallam University aimed to share the outcomes of the research, and develop a national network of institutions with an interest in change academy methodologies.

Methodology

Benchmarking exercise

The purpose of the benchmarking exercise was to provide information for national dissemination on the extent to which internal change academies and the widespread use of change academy methodologies has impacted on approaches to leading change processes in higher education institutions. The questions focused on the strategic approaches taken by institutions and how the activities conducted through internal change academies, or the use of change academy methodologies, aligned with broader institutional approaches to leading change and educational development².

Contributing institutions and contact names were identified through early discussion with colleagues at the Higher Education Academy and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. In wanting to ensure that we reached as many institutions as possible which had used change academy methodologies and/or were running or planning to run an internal change academy, we also posted an open invitation via e-mail to the wider SEDA network. The responses to this open invitation indicated that there was considerable interest from other institutions in using change academy methodologies and provided an additional institution for the benchmarking exercise.

Visits to complete the benchmarking questionnaires were undertaken with five of the institutions in late summer/autumn 2008, another of the institutions completed the questionnaire via e-mail. The notes from the visits were collated by the authors and verified by the institutional contacts before inclusion in this report.

Annotated Bibliography

The purpose of the bibliography was to bring together in a single place, the more recent literature on educational change, drawing on sources both central and external to higher education, and including materials drawn on by the institutions involved in the benchmarking exercise.

Professional development event

The purpose of the professional development held at Sheffield Hallam University was to:

- share and discuss the findings and outputs of the project;

² A summary of the benchmarking questions can be found in appendix 2.

- give participants a flavour of different aspects of institutions' approaches and techniques in running their own internal change academies;
- provide the opportunity to develop a network of like minded individuals;
- explore together some of the implications of the project's findings and think about some of the future challenges.

The event was designed to be creative, innovative and participatory to model good practice in running internal change academies. It was by invitation only to the HEA, the LFHE, the institutions which had participated in the benchmarking exercise, all institutions which had previously sent teams to the national Change Academy and members of SEDA committees. Some Sheffield Hallam staff with a particular interest in educational change and two student presenters were also invited. The programme can be found in Appendix 3.

Summary of Findings

This part of the report is divided into five sections to broadly mirror the layout of the benchmarking questions.

A mix of pre- and post-92 universities, and colleges which had recently been awarded university status, were included in the benchmarking exercise. The size of institutions varied significantly from those with around 3,000 students to those with 30,000. This has had a direct impact on the reach and spread of the internal change academy (ICA) projects in different institutions and on the number of staff who experienced the change academy (CA) methodologies. For the purpose of these findings the individual responses from the institutions involved in the benchmarking exercise have been anonymised.

Part 1 - An overview of internal change academies

This section focuses on the rationale and experiences of institutions running their own change academies and lays the foundation for the later sections which focus much more on leading change and change processes. It includes information on management and leadership arrangements for ICAs and resourcing.

Rationale

The reasons for engaging with the CA approach and methodologies were broadly similar across the institutions involved. All had previously sent teams to the national Change Academy (NCA) programme, at least once, and the decision to run their own event was strongly influenced by the positive experiences of the NCA: many respondents commented how energised and motivated they had been on returning to their own institutions. This is reflected in the HEFCE Interim Evaluation of the HEA which found that *"Change Academy is consistently remarked on by those who have participated as a successful and effective process that delivers on its stated aim that it 'enables them [HEIs] to develop the knowledge, capacity and enthusiasm for achieving complex institutional change'"* (Oakleigh Consulting Ltd, 2008: 32). Additionally, staff leading on or responsible in a significant way for their ICAs had all attended a national Change Academy.

All the institutions had seen the potential to adapt the change academy model internally to enable a number of change projects and larger initiatives to be taken forward. Timing and resources were cited as being key factors. Two of the institutions stated that whilst they had immediate enthusiasm for running an ICA after returning from the NCA, they had to wait for the institutional context to be right. Additional impetus for running ICAs came from: the development/implementation of new internal strategies; new senior management; a feeling across the organisation that change was slow and new approaches were needed; and, the potential to

connect with existing initiatives to enhance their impact e.g. Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs).

Most of the institutions indicated that the rationale for using the CA methodologies was not just about the outcomes of various projects and initiatives that were the focus, but also was about the process of change. The methodology was used to develop understanding and enthusiasm for, and ownership of change, and create a cadre of change agents within the institutions to build cross institutional working relationships and break down barriers to change. In this way it was a powerful professional development process through which participants could progress a practical piece of work.

The most commonly quoted feedback from participants was that their motivation to engage was a mixture of the opportunity for professional development combined with time and (sometimes) resources to work on their project. The sense of internal change academies 'feeling different' had a powerful effect on participation. Examples were given of staff joining in with activities outside of their comfort zones and engaging in higher levels of risk-taking than they would normally.

Structure

Five of the institutions involved had run at least one ICA, the others had applied the CA methodologies in a structured way but not through an ICA. All the institutions drew on the NCA approach, but this was tailored and structured in different ways:

- A series of short events and activities using the CA methodologies to support and engage colleagues with the process of change in relation to an institutional NCA project. This was open attendance rather than team based.
- A series of events using the CA methodologies including institutional staff development days, development activities within academic departments and events linked to specific initiatives (e.g. to support the work of an institutional NCA project). This was open attendance rather than team based.
- An ICA comprising a series of events in academic departments and two cross institutional events: a two day residential and an away day (both off campus). This was focused on engaging colleagues and students with the development of institutional strategy, therefore it was open attendance rather than team based.
- An ICA supporting 5-7 project teams comprising a two day residential (off campus), a small amount of pre-work for the teams and ad hoc support throughout the projects' lifespan. An online resource of materials and tools made available to all staff at the institution.

- A six month ICA process supporting 5-6 project teams comprising a short workshop on campus, a two day and two night residential (off campus) and meetings with team leaders.
- A year long ICA process supporting 5 project teams comprising a welcome meeting, a two day residential (off campus), two half day development events, meetings with team leaders and ad hoc additional support. An online support organisation was provided to participants with materials, weekly online activities and discussions.
- A year long ICA process supporting 5 to 6 teams with a two day residential (off campus) with multiple streams of workshops, an away day, meetings with teams and team leaders throughout the year and fortnightly check-ins with each of the teams. Online support from a site within the institution's virtual learning environment and an external social networking site.

The maximum size of project teams participating in ICAs was 8 members. All institutions stressed the importance of engaging a range or 'slice' of colleagues to enable different kinds of discussions and projects to emerge, and to reflect the collaborative and participatory approach to change inherent in the CA methodologies. All encouraged the involvement of students: with 6 of the 7 institutions actively involving them in the activities described above. Notably, one institution involved a team from a local private company and another had a team member from a professional body.

Two institutions had followed the structure of the NCA closely: with whole group plenary sessions followed by team working slots in allocated team 'base-rooms'. Others adapted the structure significantly but still kept a mixture of facilitated input about aspects of change and structured team working to apply the learning directly to a project or issue.

The institutions that ran team-based ICAs had an open bidding process, with specific selection criteria only being used in some instances. Four institutions had used a theme for one or more iterations of their ICA: the development of an institutional Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy; improving the student experience; embedding the aims of an institutional CETL around blended learning; and, supporting an institutional corporate plan. Two institutions had run ICAs without a specific theme for projects just openly inviting any learning and teaching related bid and one institution did not limit it to only learning and teaching projects. Our findings showed that having a particular theme to an internal change academy was seen as a benefit at some institutions, but not at others. In the other two institutions CA methodologies had been used to support a range of initiatives including: the first year student experience; engagement with an institutional NCA project; and, a collaborative research project. The practice at one institution was to encourage

teams, through an online environment, to look for shared areas of interest and to make connections as part of an ongoing process.

Where there was a common theme across some projects, for example student feedback, additional staff were brought in to act as facilitators/knowledge brokers. More generally facilitation and delivery was in-house with the occasional use of external consultants, often those who had been involved in running the national Change Academy. Although a number of institutions have in fact successfully employed external consultants, particularly for their residentials, internal change academy processes have also provided significant opportunity to recognise and positively acknowledge the skills and expertise of existing university staff as facilitators and as experts. One institution very successfully invited a member of their University Executive to run a session about institutional change, entitled 'Why are you waiting for permission?'

Management and reporting arrangements for internal change academy programmes did vary significantly between institutions, largely dependent on who was the budget holder for the process. In most cases the management and reporting of ICAs and CA activities mirrored that of other quality enhancement initiatives. In some institutions this was light touch (through learning and teaching committee structures), in others it involved reports to executive groups or direct to the head of institution. Most had a steering group or organisation team to oversee the running of the ICA/CA activities. For those institutions where some funding for ICA activity came from external sources they were required to report to these external bodies.

Senior level support has been an important factor at a number of institutions. Profile-raising has been particularly high where Pro-Vice Chancellors have attended the national Change Academy, seen the benefit of the process and gone on to promote it internally in a positive way: giving the process considerable credibility within institutions. At more than one institution running an ICA this support empowered groups to do the things they wanted to do within the context of their institution's Strategic Plan.

Investment in staff and time is a substantial aspect of the ICA process. Respondents who attended the national Change Academy reported a disproportionate amount of gain from the four day residential i.e. far more than would have been experienced from traditional away days or the equivalent time spread out over a longer period. Although no-one interviewed had been able to afford a four day internal change academy residential, those who had run two day residentials as part of a longer process found this time commitment to be highly productive, rewarding and valued.

The variety in the length of the ICA processes is interesting. Some institutions saw this model as a way of engaging people critically with complex change concepts and felt this was best represented as a journey that teams of participants went on together over an extended period of time. Others saw this as a novel way of

engaging a large number of people with a new approach to strategy development, therefore it was not essential to involve the same people at each stage in the process, or extend the process beyond the development of the particular strategy. The benefits of and contrasts between these two approaches were not explored during the benchmarking exercise but this does illustrate the flexibility of the model and the way it has been tailored to specific purposes and contexts.

Respondents highlighted the need to get the balance of activities right at the residential events; there can be a tendency for teams to request more team time and some less plenary input, but the plenary sessions are an essential part of the process and on reflection after the residential, staff often do come to realise and appreciate the importance of getting that balance right. The opportunity to spend quality time together in teams was a recurring theme in the benchmarking exercise, and reinforced in publication (Gentle, 2008; Dandy, 2009).

Resourcing

Arrangements for resourcing broadly focused on learning and teaching monies with funding coming from a range of sources such as: Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund, an LFHE Fellowship, Higher Education Innovation Fund 3 and a CETL. The main associated costs are external venues (overnight accommodation, catering etc) and facilitation costs, which sometimes related to the use of external consultants. Two institutions that ran team based ICAs gave an estimated cost per participant at £350-£550. Additional funding was given to internal change academy projects in only one institution, the approach at all the other institutions being that the process was the main investment and that the underpinning rationale was to support project staff to explore ways of achieving change with no additional resource. Our findings indicated that this generally was not thought to be a major inhibitor to the successful achievement of those projects. However, two institutions indicated that part of the support from the ICA could be to help projects obtain additional funding and their participation in the ICA was felt to give them a 'head-start'.

Residentials were generally held external to the institutions concerned. This was for a number of reasons: taking staff away from their familiar environment and removing them from access to email, telephones and usual distractions of a normal working day was seen as an important factor not only in focusing on the task in hand but also in changing behaviours. Using a quality venue such as a hotel can also be seen as a reward for staff whilst at the same time such an investment can set an expectation that staff are expected to work hard.

Part 2 - Approaches to change

In this section we look at how change usually happens in the institutions involved and how that compares to the application of the change academy methodologies. The

discussion includes: institutional drivers; how the student experience has influenced internal change academy processes; and approaches to scholarship and research.

Approaches to leading change

As we might expect, approaches to leading educational change, and the alignment of ICA activities within institutional approaches, varied between institutions. A summary of the different approaches is presented below:

1. The first ICA at this institution coincided with a shift in institutional culture to engage in more participatory, dialogue based approaches to change, and was linked directly to a high profile change in corporate strategy by supporting projects which contributed to this. At present the institutional culture has changed again, with less emphasis on collaborative approaches. The role of the ICA has shifted accordingly and is now seen as 'seeding' change in a more emergent way by supporting individual projects rather than at an institutional level. Overall the impact of the ICA approach has been part of a shift toward more inclusive models of change and away from the traditional committee model. There is some institutional reluctance to some of the approaches (for example seeing the focus on emergence as a substitute for effective management rather than empowering individuals), but this was felt to be an expected stage in a long term shift in cultural change. The process was not presented as professional development and its separate branding has ensured it is not seen as being owned by a particular department or agenda.
2. There is considerable alignment between the approach of the ICA and approaches in other institutional initiatives. There is an institutional philosophy of having a 'do-it-yourself' culture: equipping staff with the skills required rather than employing large numbers of specialist learning support staff. Currently institutional level change is centred on a small number of large change initiatives. Some of these have incorporated approaches from the ICA. All link to institutional corporate strategies. The institution sees the locus of change at the academic department level and the ICA is part of a broader approach to engage staff at that level with the process of change and to identify themselves as change leaders. Support, advice, direction and encouragement was provided by the ICA team to enable them to achieve that.
3. The ICA marked a departure from the usual approach to developing institutional strategy: this was usually through a small group of senior staff. The ICA focused on the role of local action in institutional wide agendas, was more collaborative and discursive than traditional approaches and was felt to facilitate a 'bottom-up' model. The approaches used were to some extent contained within the ICA but have begun to be adopted in some of the academic and professional services departments that were involved.

4. Within the University there are multiple models of change in use, both by individual departments and at the institutional level (as evidenced through approaches to developing institutional strategy/restructuring etc). The ICA is not in conflict with these models but does differ in that it does not recommend a single or rigid framework for thinking about change: rather, it takes a principles based approach and then makes informed and contextual decisions about specific methodologies to use within that principled approach. However, the approach within the ICA does tend to be more participatory, encourage leadership and ownership of change at all levels, and have a stronger focus on creativity than existing institutional approaches.
5. At a formal level institutional strategies and plans set out the top level change agenda, and as a new institution this is strongly tied into stakeholders' and funders' requirements via business plans. The annual planning round identifies those projects and initiatives that will be supported to deliver strategic plans and the resources made available to carry out the work. Informally, considerable change happens within communities and there is diffusion of approaches at the local level. The application of CA methodologies focused on encouraging local engagement with and ownership of the process of change, this differed from previous approaches which had focused on the outputs of change projects. Because the institution is undergoing substantial structural change the impact of applying CA methodologies across the institution is not yet well understood.
6. Institutional approaches to change are implicit rather than clearly articulated. There are some change 'champions' who are moving initiatives forward, but there is a sense that most staff find change threatening. Structurally there is a principle of certain parts of the institution having a leadership responsibility for a particular area e.g. the virtual learning environment. The general culture is collegial, supportive, and non-judgemental with a significant feeling of loyalty and belonging to the institution. The application of CA methodologies was felt to be aligned to these aspects of the institutional culture. However, the methodologies did differ from previous professional development activities by involving more interactive activities and a wider range of staff. This was felt to work best when addressing an area of institutional need in which everyone had a role and could relate to the theme.
7. The ICA was part of a broader aim for the institution to be a learning organisation with innovation as a key characteristic. As such, it was strongly aligned with the institutional strategy and change agenda and was seen as a key mechanism to support organisational learning. However, this was seen as a significant contrast to historic approaches to change. In particular, the institution was perceived to have been in 'stasis' for a long period and there was a considerable desire across the institution to do something new. The ICA had to work hard to demonstrate that the new approaches would result in different outcomes.

One of our key findings was that none of these approaches to educational change remained static. One institution had actually experienced a shift in thinking over the lifecycle of its change academy, moving from a collaborative, participatory approach to change which followed the institution's corporate vision, to one which allowed greater autonomy for growing change through individual projects.

Where ICA and institutional approaches to change were aligned there were different reasons for these. In some this was because the ICA sat within the broader institutional change agenda. In others there was a sense of timeliness in that the ICA could not have taken place until it was a good fit with the institutional culture, or there was a general desire for change that enabled something new to emerge (e.g. the emergence of an articulated approach to educational change, or a drive to become a learning organisation). The main differences between historic or current institutional approaches to change and those encouraged through ICA processes seemed to be around the collaborative participatory nature of ICAs, the involvement of a cross section of staff and students from across the institution, and the novelty of the methods and techniques used.

At the smaller institutions there was a sense that institutional change had the *potential* to take place at a rapid pace. Partly, this was perceived as due to the fact it was possible to reach a considerable proportion of staff through ICA activities. For example, at the two smaller institutions between 40% and 50% of academic staff had taken part in ICA/CA activities. At the larger institutions the proportion of staff who had participated was less than 10%.

Institutional drivers

The benchmarking questions in this area were designed to draw out the relationship between institutional drivers and approaches to change at each of the institutions. This again varied across the piece, although the drivers generally came out of the universities' strategic plans: either through direct alignment with strategy or indirectly through alignment with other institutional initiatives (e.g. CETLs, NCA projects). For example, where there were particular high level statements about a focus on learning and teaching or on being business facing then these were reflected in the themes and projects of ICAs. At one institution achieving efficiency and effectiveness through structural change is also an ongoing process. At another there was very clear evidence from a subsequent university staff experience survey they had undertaken that institutional drivers (and goals) were clearly expressed and understood by staff across the university and articulated in change projects.

A key message from those interviewed was that timeliness could be an important driver for running internal change academies, particularly in the context of there being a desire and willingness for change. This manifested itself both at a personal/local level and at an institutional level. For example, at one institution the ICA was seen as coming at the right time for the institution to bring together three

connected agendas that were emerging at the same time: a desire to apply the learning from participating in the NCA to build capacity and enthusiasm for change; to put an emerging approach to educational change within learning, teaching and assessment into practice; and to align with the institution's approach to use student feedback (e.g. from the National Student Survey) to improve the student experience.

The student experience

A number of projects taken to internal change academies were as a direct result of responding to student feedback. To gain a broader insight into the institutions interviewed we also asked about their approaches to collecting and responding to student feedback more generally as this provided us with a greater insight into the different institutional cultures and the relationships with students. Those methods of feedback included: the National Student Survey, module feedback, staff-student liaison committees, and local feedback at an individual level. In one institution it was a requirement of the bidding process that projects had to specifically demonstrate how they utilised different forms of feedback when constructing their project bid; this then formed one of the selection criteria.

Some institutions talked about how they employed students within quality enhancement work as pedagogic researchers, in student liaison work, in learning and teaching support roles, and providing placement opportunities within an educational development unit.

Scholarship and research

Taking an evidence-informed, scholarly approach was an integral aspect of the internal change academies, both in the sense of professional staff development and to underpin and inform the process and the content of the ICA. A number of institutions had formal theoretical inputs as part of their ICA residencies. Online learning environments, where used, proved a useful resource to share academic resources and to engage in open discussion about different approaches to educational change.

Institutions drew on a wide range of different change models and literature in the scholarly underpinning of their approach. Many were informed by the scholarship informing the national Change Academy, the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education and, in some institutions, by the adaptation of materials from other sectors such as schools, business and social development. The decision of which scholarship to draw on was dependent on the personal expertise and experiences of the organisation team and what was felt to meet the needs of the participants and fit the institutional context.

A number of specific areas where scholarship was drawn on to inform the approach were mentioned in the benchmarking exercise, including: appreciative inquiry; action research; complexity theory and emergence (notably in relation to the involvement of

an external facilitator who worked with the NCA); creativity; risk management; HE approaches to evaluation; project management; force field analysis; budget management; leadership; influencing skills; and, the use of storytelling. Overall the emphasis was on theories and approaches to cultural change, rather than a more formal models of structural change.

Some institutions explicitly referred to taking an iterative research informed approach to development of their ICA and CA processes.

Tools and techniques

In addition to taking a scholarly and informed approach various tools and techniques had been used, adapted and developed to meet the particular needs of the different institutions.

Some used a team or individual diagnostic tool early in their ICA to support project team development: [Colourworks](#); [Riso-Hudson Enneagram Type Indicator](#); [Belbin Team Roles](#); and [Team Management Systems](#).

Many mentioned that using unfamiliar and creative techniques helped to make the CA activities feel different to other professional development activities. This was felt to be integral to helping participants start to think differently about change, and to develop new ways of working. For example, one institution used music at various points in their events to make it feel different. Another employed a dance theme throughout their event; using a dance card to mix up participants and using choreography as a metaphor for change.

One of the core ideas underpinning the ICA activities was the collaborative and participatory nature of cultural change, and the role that dialogue and conversation play in the change process. In view of this a number of institutions used specific techniques to encourage new kinds of conversations, break down cliques, enable collaborative learning, develop new networks, and break down some of the perceived barriers to change. These included: [world café](#); [dialogue sheets](#); 'speed dating' type activities; and, the use of posters for asynchronous conversations.

A number of techniques were mentioned in the context of challenging people to think differently about change and their specific change project/issue. These ranged from styles of facilitation (e.g. using facilitative questioning either verbally or using cards) to creative thinking techniques such as the [Ten Faces of Innovation](#).

To stimulate creativity some institutions asked ICA participants to create representations of their project, ideas, or future vision through visual and active techniques: rich pictures; collage; model making; storytelling; human interaction video; mythodrama; and producing short films or photostories.

These kinds of highly interactive activities were felt to encourage risk taking, and move people out of their comfort zone. Although, it was clear some participants had felt uncomfortable with the techniques they were seen to be an essential and successful part of CA processes.

Part 3 - Student involvement

We were particularly interested in finding out about the extent to which students had been involved and engaged in internal change academy processes and the impact that involvement had on them both as individual learners and upon the staff and the institution.

Students were involved as active participants in ICA and CA type events in all but one of the institutions. The organisation team at this institution felt that there was some reluctance from staff to involve students. One institution made it compulsory for their ICA teams to have a student member, who are encouraged to provide peer support for one another through a network of student participants. The students were paid for their attendance at ICA events and meetings and in one case a student was actually funded by their sandwich year employer as they could see the real value of the programme. Two institutions encouraged teams to include student members but this was not a condition of participation. One of these institutions accepted a Students' Union led team where 3 of the 6 team members were students.

Where CA methodologies were used outside ICAs students and Students' Union representatives were invited to participate in events and in one case were seen as crucial to the success of the wider initiative the CA type events were supporting.

Two institutions had worked with students on the facilitation of CA activities. In one this involved students producing drama pieces for staff development events. In another, students volunteered to facilitate a filming activity at an ICA residential, and the Students' Union music society orchestra provided evening entertainment. This high level of student engagement led to a number of unanticipated outcomes: one of the student facilitators being paid for work in one of the faculties; and, a student team member co-authoring an academic paper and national conference presentation with the ICA organisation team.

The involvement of students was felt to be an overwhelmingly positive experience. Students were treated as equal participants in the ICAs and feedback from students suggests there were multiple benefits to taking part: personal and professional development that contributed to their employability; a better understanding of how their institution and the HE sector in general worked; and, positive outcomes for the project they were part of. For staff, student involvement provided opportunities to get real and in-depth feedback from students on their project work and challenged some of the assumptions they had about student perceptions and expectations. From the institutional perspective involving students added a valuable and, in some cases,

essential dimension, built a closer working relationship with the Students' Union and reflected institutional aims around being 'student centred'.

Part 4 - Evaluation and Review

Approaches to evaluation and review have probably presented the widest diversity of responses in the sense of how evaluation is prioritised and thought about within the different institutions. This section focuses on the evaluation of change academies as a model for leading educational change. Questions were asked about evaluation, monitoring and review, both in terms of how the ICA programme overall is evaluated and reviewed and how the outcomes are communicated; also about how the work of participants and projects is evaluated.

Approaches to evaluation of ICA activities

Overall, evaluation tended to be light touch and informal. Reflection, self-evaluation and open feedback with participants (rather than structured feedback questionnaires or interviews) were common. This reflective approach also informed the development of ICA programmes: enabling the facilitators to identify strengths and improve subsequent programmes. Not all institutions had a formal evaluation plan for their ICA activity. In most cases the facilitators of ICA activities presented their evaluation of ICA activities via verbal presentations and written reports through the lines of reporting described in [part one](#) and were subject to the normal requirements for large initiatives at their institution: e.g. inclusion on the corporate risk register. Where some resourcing for ICA activity came from external sources the evaluation included reporting to these external bodies: for example one used an established proforma to report directly to the HEA. Similarly, where the ICA activity was part of a larger initiative (e.g. CETL, national CA project) the evaluation was generally incorporated within the broader evaluation strategy of these initiatives. For example, one institution included the evaluation of their ICA activity in reflective logs and research undertaken for the broader project.

In many cases ICA activity was measured against institutional and departmental strategies and business plans; both through the evaluation reports and the selection criteria for project based ICAs. The reports focused on both the processes undertaken and the actions that arose from the ICA activities. In particular, one institution described proactively evaluating and reporting specific actions the management team needed to be aware of or make decisions about.

In smaller institutions, the facilitators and participants saw each other regularly as part of their working lives; therefore they were able to obtain informal feedback as an ongoing process.

In one institution there was no formal requirement for the evaluation of staff development activities. The lead person, along with other colleagues at a similar

level has a relatively high level of autonomy and does not have to report in detail upwards about spending in this area. However, the use of Key Performance Indicators had recently been introduced into all institutional strategies so there was a general feeling that accountability is increasing.

One institution used a particular evaluation model already in use at the institution ([Theory of Change](#)) to tease out and frame impacts, and as the basis for the formal evaluation which led to the case for resources for a later iteration of the programme. This model also informed the overarching framework for their most recent ICA residential.

For some institutions the outcomes and impacts of ICA activities have fed into other activities e.g. a national e-learning benchmarking exercise, institutional Quality Assurance Agency audits.

Approaches to evaluation of participant projects

In those institutions that held project based ICAs the approach to evaluating the outcomes of individual projects varied. In one, individual projects follow their own lines of reporting as appropriate, so were not monitored or evaluated as part of the ICA. In another the approach has been light touch: it is anticipated that the teams will need to evaluate the impact of their project for their department/line management, therefore they are asked to send a copy of this evaluation to the ICA lead facilitator.

In an institution where additional project funding was given to teams there was understandably greater accountability. Specific performance measures for projects are developed in collaboration with each of the relevant departments and they are required to update their progress against criteria throughout the process and to provide an evaluation report to the ICA team. The key has been to get project teams to identify tangible outcomes and deliverables and measure their performance against these.

Professional development around evaluation was built into the programme of some of the ICAs. For example, one introduced participants to three different evaluation models and had some activities to help teams apply these to their projects. Another built self evaluation of team progress into the residential programme; using a questionnaire, a feelings/ideas session employing behavioural analysis methodology, and a creative session where teams used song, mime and poetry to feedback on their progress. Through these kind of activities the facilitators saw that the teams had made progress, increased confidence levels, and altered their expectations. One institution held a specific evaluation workshop three months after the residential where teams were introduced to a principles based approach to evaluation and a number of different evaluation tools.

Impact of Internal Change Academies activities within institutions

All of the institutions described receiving very positive feedback from individuals and departments that participated in ICA activities. In one institution project teams have requested to extend their involvement with the ICA; they have volunteered to be involved in internal publicity for the programme and refresher sessions have been planned for the subsequent year. In another, projects have continued to brand themselves with the title of the ICA long after the formal input. Those that ran team based ICAs felt that the perceived value of the process was indicated by the continued growing demand for places.

There was a sense that the ICA activities had not only facilitated a shift in perceptions of participants around approaches to change, but in some cases they had encouraged more critical and explicit discussion of approaches to change across the institution. For example, one institution described the ICA approach as offering a vital opportunity for staff to view institutional change as emergent, messy and unfinished and that the momentum generated had fed forward into re-structuring and overarching change processes. Transformational change is now viewed as being within the control of individuals. The impact of this was felt to extend beyond the individuals involved at events and project teams to include wider networks of colleagues and students.

Where a residential was part of the ICA process participants had been surprised at the progress they were able to make in a relatively short space of time: confirming the choice of this model. Even with relatively simple tools and techniques participants described significant impacts from having focused protected time, and using new techniques to further their projects. There was a feeling at one institution that people have sought out new tools as they were drawn in to the culture of the ICA approach and the potential new tools offered to work with colleagues and students in different ways.

One of the areas where ICAs had a tangible impact on institutional culture was around the collaborative approach: involving colleagues and students from different departments and roles working on common projects and initiatives. In many institutions this was unprecedented (particularly in bridging the divide between professional services and academic staff), and resulted in improved long term working relationships and a more collaborative approach to other areas of development. For example, at an institution where the ICA was used in the development of their LTA Strategy the understanding gained was broader than just LTA understanding. They unpacked the language used, and ended up with a broader shared understanding and collective ownership of the plans produced. At the beginning of the event some colleagues were sceptical about what LTA had to do with their role, but saw it as a shared responsibility at the end of the ICA.

The impact of ICAs could also be seen through the interest in and spread of techniques and approaches used within the process. Many institutions described the tools and techniques being used within other professional development activities and institutional processes. For example: using creative thinking techniques at a conference for senior academic and professional services staff planning the future direction of the institution; a more facilitative approach in workshops and the head of institution's open meetings; collaborative approaches to strategy development; interest in the model from other central departments; and, the use by ICA participants of the tools and approaches in their teaching and work with colleagues. In some cases this felt high-risk and 'chaotic' but resulted in extremely successful outcomes. There were experiences of a real sense of continuation through the ongoing use of online and other resources beyond the life of internal change academies.

In the smaller institutions in particular there had been significant impacts in terms of the how many staff the process had reached; for example 40% of staff at one of the benchmarking institutions.

An additional impact of running ICAs was that, in some cases, it provided opportunities for the facilitators to work with areas of the institution and individuals who would not normally engage with this kind of professional development process. It also created potential for future work: for example in one case the facilitator was able to work with every academic department within the institution during a three year period, applying the techniques and approaches from the ICA through other development work.

The individual projects themselves have also had an impact institutionally. For example, the outcome from one project team was an institutional event exploring a model of student engagement. One institution indicated that they had felt the biggest impact institutionally when they had addressed areas of common concern through the ICA approach (e.g. the first year student experience).

Although all institutions were asked specifically about whether they were asked to demonstrate 'value for money' through their evaluation and analysis of institutional impact, very few were able to articulate how they did this. Continued funding of annual ICA programmes was felt to indicate this, as was agreement in principle that one institution had for academic departments to share funding. The fact that academic departments included the themed focus of the ICA in their business plans was felt to indicate perceived value of the process at one institution. Two institutions estimated that the cost per participant of their ICA was broadly in line with sending them to an external conference, even when this was an extended process (6 months to a year). The benefits of participating in the ICA were felt to be significantly greater than a single conference attendance and therefore this was seen as a very cost effective professional development process.

Part 5 - Looking to the future

The questions in the final section of the benchmarking exercise asked about future plans for running further internal change academies. One institution summarised the challenges facing the sustainability of ICAs as being able to obtain sufficient resource to fund ICAs, maintaining the freshness of the approach, and being clear that the approach is appropriate. None of the institutions had long term resourcing in place: three were funded through special initiatives (through HEFCE and LFHE); the others were funded institutionally with two required to present a business case for funding with each iteration. At one university where the ICA is closely linked with an institutional CETL thoughts have already turned to issues of future sustainability, particularly around potential sources of funding. Those institutions that ran ICAs indicated this was not something they believed would continue indefinitely as an annual programme: the general view was that there is probably a limited lifespan to this approach with scope for between two and four iterations of the ICA process without significantly changing the programme. Some institutions were only at the stage of having run one programme whilst another was thinking about going into its fourth.

One of the strengths of ICAs was felt to be the novelty and freshness of the approach. Maintaining the feeling that this was a different way to approach change was a key consideration in conversations about the sustainability of the model. One institution talked about staff fatigue with a particular technique that had been used extensively across the institution. In the smaller institutions the lifespan of ICAs may be shorter as a relatively high proportion of staff had already actively participated in ICA type activities (although it may be that they have a longer life in larger institutions where it will take longer to engage a substantial proportion of staff with the ideas and approaches). Most institutions had varied the structure and content of their ICA with each iteration, as part of a scholarly and reflective approach to practice. This both refreshed the programme and kept the 'novelty value'. Some thought that there was probably just a natural lifespan and that they would know when that time had come. This appears to mirror the thinking of some institutions about the number of times they send a team to the national Change Academy, although cost is also a significant factor in that consideration.

Looking beyond the annual programme of ICAs one institution was thinking about running an ICA alumni event to bring together teams from all the previous years to reflect on their experiences and possibly to ascertain some of the longer term impacts.

Many institutions have shown an interest in applying the techniques and approaches associated with Change Academies in their institutions. There have now been 56 institutions that have participated in the national CA and have the potential to apply the approaches in their own institutions. The national CA continues to develop and

any discussion of the future sustainability of ICAs must be considered in the context of the national programme. The significant number of institutions and individuals within the sector demonstrating a genuine interest in educational and institutional change processes is encouraging, and argues for more work in this area to bring together current scholarship and experiences. A possible outcome from this research project is to develop a network of colleagues with an interest in applying and developing CA techniques and approaches to provide a forum for sharing and peer support between and across institutions.

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<http://www.lfhe.ac.uk/publications/newsletters.html/inpractice18.pdf>

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<http://www.lfhe.ac.uk/publications/newsletters.html/inpractice11.pdf>

Oakleigh Consulting Ltd (2008) **Interim Evaluation of the Higher Education Academy**. Higher Education Funding Council for England. Available online at:

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/2008/rd02_08/

Links

Belbin Team Roles - <http://www.belbin.com/>

Colourworks - <http://www.thecolourworks.com/>

Dialogue Sheets - <http://www.qube.ac.uk/QuBE/toolbox/diags/dialogsheet/dialsht>

Higher Education Academy's Change Academy -

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/institutions/change>

Riso-Hudson Enneagram Type Indicator - <http://www.enneagraminstitute.com/>

Team Management System - <http://www.tms.com.au/>

Ten Faces of Innovation - <http://www.tenfacesofinnovation.com/>

Theory of Change - <http://www.theoryofchange.org/>

World Café - <http://www.theworldcafe.com/>

APPENDIX 1 - Statements on areas of good practice

The following statements have been drawn out of the benchmarking exercise and are supported by some of the educational change literature; they relate specifically to internal change academies and more broadly to managing change processes. They are intended to be used as a self assessment for those institutions that have run internal change academies and as a useful starting point for those considering undertaking them.

1. Management and leadership

- There is a clear rationale for running an internal change academy and this is visibly articulated.
- The programme is designed in such a way that it will build community, team-working and partnership and at the same time challenge organisational barriers to change.
- (Where possible) a senior member of staff at the institution provides executive support and/or sponsorship.
- Consideration is given to the timeliness of any project proposals and to the running of the internal change academy in order to maximise effective engagement and to achieve maximum benefit and impact.

2. Strategic alignment

- The rationale for the internal change academy is clearly aligned with the achievement of institutional goals (wherever possible) and this is clearly articulated.
- (Where relevant) the internal change academy activities are clearly aligned with the institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy.

3. Understanding change

- Individuals are able to develop their own understanding of educational change processes through a blend of scholarly input and opportunities in practice.
- Opportunities are provided for participants to engage in conversation and/or activities which provide a broad overview of different approaches to change/models.

4. Student involvement

- The programme promotes, encourages and supports the involvement of students as active participants and as part of the longer process.
- Staff are actively encouraged to consider the benefits of student involvement and to articulate that in their project proposals.
- Opportunities are provided for students to get involved in the internal change academy activities in other ways.
- Developing a dialogue with students about educational change is a core aspiration of the internal change academy process.

5. Staff involvement and engagement

- The programme organisers offer a range of opportunities for staff to engage in activities which will help to build confidence.
- All staff involved as participants have demonstrated their commitment to the process (by whatever means appropriate) and have a visible sense of ownership of their respective projects.
- Cross team sharing and dissemination is seen as an integral part of the internal change academy process and participants are required to actively engage with this.
- Other staff development opportunities are made available to team members as part of an ongoing commitment to achieving educational change.

6. Taking a scholarly approach

- Staff involved as facilitators and as participants acknowledge and reference the relevant change literature in the development of their projects.
- Credibility is achieved through the content of the internal change academy programme being based on a sound scholarly underpinning.

7. Resources

- The institution (at whatever level necessary) provides the necessary resources (financial and staff time) to support the internal change academy process and continues to consider all associated financial implications.
- Information packs are made available in paper and/or online format to complement the change academy activities.

- The use of tools and techniques achieves a balance between appropriateness and novelty of the techniques and consideration is always given to the scholarly underpinning of the related activities.

8. Evaluation and value for money

- Evaluation is an integral part of the change academy process and the institution creates and clearly communicates an expectation that evaluation will take place at two levels: by the individual projects and by the internal change academy as a process.
- The concept of value for money is a key consideration.

9. Embedding projects and sustainability

- The institution recognises the importance of the embedding and sustainability of internal change academy activities and provides support and guidance to enable this to be achieved.

APPENDIX 2 - Benchmarking questions

SEDA RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT GRANT

Learning from internal change academy processes

Benchmarking questions

What we want to find out

- The impacts of internal change academies on learning
 - The effects and benefits of different approaches
 - Similarities, differences, lessons learnt
 - More about the different kinds of processes of leading change
-

Section A: About your institution and how your internal change academy is organised

Name of Institution:

Name and title of respondent:

email address:

Telephone number:

A1. Rationale for your Internal Change Academy

Please explain why your institution decided to run an internal change academy
(If you previously attended a national Change Academy please give dates and a sentence on your project, and if you have run more than one please write about them all where possible)

A2. Your internal change academy

Please briefly describe the structure of your internal change academy with the following prompt questions in mind.

- Was it based around a particular theme or was it generally open? (e.g. were the projects LTA and/or business related, did it have a narrower theme like employability)
- Is it an open bidding process? If yes, what are the selection criteria? If no, how are teams selected?
- How was it promoted?

- How many teams took part (and how many per team)? What kind of institutional role did team members have? (e.g. academic, administrative, senior management, students)
- What kind of activities did participants actually take part in?
- Was any part of the internal change academy run external to the University?
- Over what time period was it run?
- Who was involved in the delivery? If your institution had previously sent a team to the national Change academy, to what extent were members of that team involved in your internal change academy?

A3. Management and Leadership

Please describe the management and reporting arrangement for your internal change academy.

If appropriate, how does this compare to the management and leadership of other change/development related activities at your institution?

A4. Resourcing your internal change academy

Please describe how your internal change academy has been resourced:

- a. If possible please tell us the annual expenditure and the cost per head of your internal change academy
- b. Have there been any additional staffing costs?
- c. Assessing value for money is an extremely difficult process - do you feel you have developed an approach to do this, and if so, could you please share this?

A5: Evaluation, monitoring and review

- a. Please describe how your internal change academy overall is evaluated and reviewed and how the outcomes are communicated.
- b. At what stage(s) in the overall process does evaluation take place?
- c. Please describe how your internal change academy team projects are evaluated and reviewed and how the outcomes are communicated.

Prompts:

- Do you measure their achievement against other institutional strategy goals?
- How do you evaluate impact on the student learning experience?

- How do you know the impact of internal change academy and its projects on the staff experience (both for those taking part and those not)?

Section B: Approaches underpinning your internal change academy

B1. Change at your institution

Briefly describe how change usually happens, and is approached, at your institution. In particular, could you indicate the institutional drivers for activities to bring about change at your institution?

B2: Internal Change Academy and students

Is the approach you have taken to your internal change academy influenced by the student experience at your institution. If so could you explain how this is linked, and how it might address issues around student needs and expectations?

B3: Scholarship and Research

- a. What was your approach towards the scholarly underpinning of your internal change academy?
- b. What resources and materials were developed and used to support your internal change academy?
- c. Please describe how the processes you employ to provide leadership for educational change initiatives more generally at your university could be further underpinned by scholarship and research.

B4: Leading Educational Change

We are particularly interested in the evaluation of internal change academies as a model for leading educational change.

- a. Please tell us in what ways your institution has taken the concept of internal change academies to enhance greater insight into the *process* of leading educational change.
- b. There are many different change models around learning and teaching. If possible, can you please describe the model(s) used in your internal change academy?
- c. Can you please indicate how you believe your change model impacts on student and staff learning?
- d. How does this compare with the overall institutional approach to change you described in question B.1

Section C: Overall Comment

This is an opportunity to give us your view of the overall appropriateness and effectiveness of what you have described above.

Prompts:

- What do you feel have been the strengths of your approach?
- What are you able to share for the benefit of others?
- What have been the areas you think could be improved?
- What do you think might work better in future?

We are interested in hearing your overall analysis of the internal change process.

We are particularly interested in your views on the *processes* relating to *leading* educational change at your university.

Section D: Looking to the future

- a. What are your plans for the future of internal change academy at your institution?
- b. More broadly, in future, how has the internal change academy affected institutional approaches to *leading* educational change *processes*?

And finally

Is there anything else you would like to comment on about this benchmarking exercise?

Thank you

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APPENDIX 3 - Professional Development Event Programme Learning from Internal Change Academies

Tuesday 27th January 2009 10.15 - 3.30 at Sheffield Hallam University

Time	Activity	Lead
10.15	Refreshments	
10:30 -	Welcome and Introduction	Paul Helm (<i>Sheffield Hallam University</i>)
11.00	Creative ice-breaker	Anne Oxley (<i>Sheffield Hallam University</i>)
11.00	Internal Change Academies - Sharing our findings: Part 1. <i>Broad overview</i> Presentation and group activity	Abbi Flint and Anne Oxley (<i>Sheffield Hallam University</i>)
11.30 - 12.30	2 parallel sessions: 1. Creativity session and ideas swap shop 2. Running an internal change academy (based on a 2008 HEA workshop)	Abbi Flint Nigel Dandy (<i>The University of York</i>)
12.30 - 1.15	LUNCH and networking opportunity	
1.15 - 2.00	Internal Change Academies - Sharing our findings: Part 2. <i>Student involvement</i> - Student involvement in an internal change academy - Student engagement project Including opportunity for questions and discussion	Abbi Flint and Anne Oxley Will Haywood and Carly Hynes (<i>Sheffield Hallam University students</i>)
2.00	Internal Change Academies - Sharing our findings: Part 3. <i>Leading Educational Change Processes</i>	Digital presentation - Abbi and Anne
2.05 - 3.00	Strategic Leadership: 3 perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clive Macdonald (<i>Sheffield Hallam University</i>) • Brenda Smith (<i>Higher Education Academy</i>) • Paul Gentle (<i>Leadership Foundation for Higher Education</i>) Questions and open discussion
3.00	Activity: Next steps - a network?	Abbi Flint and Anne Oxley
3.10	Questions/open discussion about the future of change academy approaches	Paul Helm
3.30	CLOSE and THANK YOU	Paul Helm

