



Leading Technology-Enhanced Learning in Higher Education

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Research and Development Series

LEADING TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Summary Report

Linda Evans

Professor of Leadership and Professional Learning, School of Education, University of Leeds

Neil Morris

Chair of Educational Technology, Innovation and Change and Director of Digital Learning, University of Leeds

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Linda Evans and Neil Morris

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Executive summary

Introduction

The use of technology-enhanced learning (TEL) has escalated in higher education over the last decade and is a defining feature of the changed and changing learning landscape. This short report¹ presents in summary form the findings of research that examined the extent to which, and how, strategic change initiatives and the embedding of technological developments in institutions may enhance students' experience of higher education. One specific strategic change-focused initiative was central to our examination: the Changing the Learning Landscape (CLL) initiative.

Background

Launched in September 2012 and involving the participation of 149 institutions over a two-year period, the CLL initiative was directed at supporting and facilitating higher education providers in England, in both the higher education and further education sectors, to develop their strategic change approaches and capacity in relation to TEL, including through inter-institutional networks and partnerships. The initiative was managed by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (the Leadership Foundation) through a programme board comprising representatives from the Association for Learning Technology (ALT), the Higher Education Academy (HEA), Jisc, the National Union of Students (NUS), and an external evaluator in a participant-observer role. The programme board reported to a Steering Group representing Hefce, its TQSE (Teaching, quality and the student experience) Committee, the QAA and the Tribal Group.

In June 2014 the Leadership Foundation issued an invitation to tender for a research project to look at improving student learning outcomes through strategic change, focusing particularly on 'the learning which has come out of the Changing the Learning Landscape project'². This is the report of that work, carried out between September 2014 and April 2015. The programme board reported to a Steering Group representing Hefce, its TQSE (Teaching, quality and the student experience) Committee, the QAA and the Tribal Group.

Aim

The main aim of the research was to examine how strategic change initiatives and the embedding of technological developments in institutions providing higher education may enhance the student experience – and to discuss the implications of our findings for institutional policy and practice. More specifically, key objectives were to identify factors that influence the success of strategic change in institutions, and, in particular, to examine the outcomes of the CLL initiative.

Method

A qualitative approach was applied to data collection and analysis, using face-to-face interviews as the main method. Consistent with the funders' expressed wishes, five case analyses were undertaken, whereby a single, discrete CLL project served as the unit of analysis and involved interviews with students, the higher education institution's (HEI's) CLL project lead, and other key players. In total, 40 interviews were conducted. Each case project was selected after initial data collection and analysis indicated its potential to be interesting and illuminative in relation to TEL-focused strategic change. Thereafter a wider pool of project participants was interviewed.

In addition to the case analyses, some data were derived from 'stand-alone' interviews with students and academics or academic-related staff from a sample of the HEIs that participated in the CLL initiative.

Key findings

- There was considerable variability in institutions' commitment to and engagement with TEL. Some English HEIs still have a long way to go to catch up with the most TEL-engaged institutions.
- Whilst bottom-up initiatives offer much potential for increasing and/or enhancing TEL provision within an institution, among our sample these alone proved insufficient to advance the TEL agenda; full support from senior management was also essential. In institutions where such support was only nominal or half-hearted, success was partial and patchy. The greatest success was evident in institutions where senior managers demonstrated full commitment to and active support for TEL provision.

1 This document is the summary version of the full report, which presents comprehensive information on the research design, and detailed discussion of the five case analyses. The full report may be accessed at www.lfhe.ac.uk/Evans5.5

2 The Leadership Foundation's Invitation to Tender.

- Four key features or characteristics of such senior managers or leaders were found to underpin the effectiveness of their TEL-focused strategic leadership:
 - Seniority and status.
 - Knowledge of 'new' learning technologies and digital resources and of the TEL field.
 - Knowledge and understanding of the institution and its people.
 - Vision for TEL in the university.
- Students were generally satisfied with the TEL provision at their institutions and, for the most part, tolerant of – if a little frustrated by – patchy or inconsistent provision. They indicated little appetite for participation in online chat rooms but were very enthusiastic about lecture capture and were frustrated when it was not offered. They showed little inclination for involvement in TEL-focused strategic decision making. Their satisfaction with TEL provision was determined by the extent to which it made their lives easier.
- The CLL initiative was universally applauded by those of our research participants who were aware of it – particularly the CLL project institutional leads. The perceived key benefits of participation in the projects included:
 - It ensured that the institutional teams remained focused on the requisite tasks, making them discipline themselves to avoid lapsing into procrastination.
 - It sustained the motivation of, and revitalised, the institutional teams.
 - It fostered a sense of achievement.
 - It offered practical support and expertise that was often lacking or in short supply in-house.
 - The consultancy brought objectivity and externality that broadened perspectives and challenged the status quo.
 - It provided leverage – again, in the person of the consultant who was recognised as an expert in the field – for institutional teams to push through their change agendas in the face of resistance.

Implications of the findings

Changing the higher education learning landscape across the sector seems likely to be a protracted process, with some institutions preferring to take small, incremental steps rather than introduce the wider-scale, more sweeping changes that mark out the sector leaders.

The success of the CLL initiative has demonstrated the benefits of external support and expert advice in advancing TEL-focused strategic change – particularly in institutions that lack the relevant expertise. Such institutions should not necessarily rely solely on in-house resources. Offering valuable consultancy at no, or very little, cost, the CLL initiative represented a particularly good 'deal' for those institutions that might hesitate, or struggle, to justify committing scarce resources to buying in external advice. If the learning landscape is to change significantly across the whole higher education sector, rather than just within the best-resourced institutions, there is a real need for more such initiatives to be rolled out.

Yet no matter how helpful and informative it is, consultancy or similar support can only provide direction and impetus; responsibility for pursuing that direction by implementing the recommended change lies with the institution. Here, effective leadership of TEL-related strategic change must be focused on a well-formulated strategy that reflects an informed, ambitious (but realisable) vision. To merit all three of these adjectives, the vision must be grounded in sound knowledge and understanding of learning technologies and of the TEL field, and of the context in which the strategy is to be applied: the institution, its culture and its people. Above all, senior management must actively – rather than nominally – support and promote such a vision. Without such support from the top, even the most creative and well-formulated bottom-up initiatives are likely to have limited success.

Since they have implications for leading institutional TEL-focused strategic change, we also present our findings in digital form, as an online toolkit that serves as a research-informed checklist for user groups such as institutional leaders and managers, learning technologists, academic developers and e-learning champions, as they prepare for, develop, deliver and evaluate change in their institutions. The online toolkit may be accessed via the Leadership Foundation website at: www.lfh.ac.uk/CLL-ISLO.

Background

How may higher education leaders and managers best take forward the digital learning agenda in their institutions? What kinds of approaches – policy and practice – are most likely to be successful? What are the key features of effective strategic change initiatives, and what are the most likely impediments? What lessons may be learned from examining other institutions' experiences of introducing – or augmenting – technology-enhanced learning (TEL) provision? And what do students think of such provision?

This document addresses these questions. Aimed at those involved in leading or supporting digital learning in their institutions, it reports the main findings of a research project that examined how strategic change initiatives and the embedding of technological developments in institutions may enhance students' experience of higher education.

One specific strategic change-focused initiative was central to the research: the Changing the Learning Landscape (CLL) programme (described below). Since a comprehensive description and account of the CLL initiative may be found in the final CLL evaluation report³, below we simply outline its key features.

The Changing the Learning Landscape initiative

The CLL initiative was managed by the Leadership Foundation through a programme board comprising representatives from the Association for Learning Technology (ALT), the Higher Education Academy (HEA), Jisc, the National Union of Students (NUS), and an external evaluator in a participant-observer role. The programme board reported to a Steering Group representing Hefce, its TQSE (Teaching, quality and the student experience) Committee, the QAA and the Tribal Group. The Steering Group was chaired by Professor Gill Nicholls, Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Surrey. Launched in September 2012, the CLL initiative was directed at supporting and facilitating higher education providers in England, in both the higher education and further education sectors, to develop their strategic change approaches and capacity in relation to TEL, including through inter-institutional networks and partnerships.

In the context of the CLL initiative, TEL (often referred to simply as digital learning) is interpreted more widely than applying to what may be considered student learning; it encompasses the use of digital technologies in relation to any aspect of the students' study-related experiences and to the administration and management of teaching and learning provision, including activities and facilities such as online submission of coursework, online facilities for booking tutorials, and the use of digital study resources.

The CLL initiative spanned two years, during which period, through two annual rounds of funding, three main forms of support were offered to institutions: a programme of practitioner workshops; project-based consultancy resource, and a strategic change programme. In total, 149 institutions participated in at least one of these.

The consultancy support option entitled institutions, within each of the two funding rounds, to five working days' consultancy: specifically, advice and support for each institution from one (or in several cases, two) out of an HEA pool of TEL-focused expert consultants. The five case analyses that formed a key dimension of our research each focused on such consultancy-led projects. A key feature of this consultancy introduced for year two of the initiative was an initial *strategic conversation*, as a means of supporting engagement that was directed towards facilitating and promoting institutions' 'taking stock', identifying priorities, and formulating strategic change-focused goals.

The research project reported here was commissioned by the Leadership Foundation to 'examine how strategic change and embedding technological developments can contribute to improvements in student learning outcomes', with a main element of the project being 'an examination of the learning which has come out of the Changing the Learning Landscape (CLL) project'⁴. In the next section we present details of the project's research design and method.

3 Cullen, P. (2014). *Changing the Learning Landscape: Connect to the Future – Final evaluation report*. London: Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.

4 Taken from the Invitation to Tender prepared by the Leadership Foundation for the Improving student learning outcomes through strategic change research project.

Research design and method

Aim and objectives

It is important to emphasise that our project was never intended to be an evaluation of the CLL initiative – that had already been carried out by Patsy Cullen⁵. Consistent with the brief, our main, overarching aim was to examine how strategic change initiatives and the embedding of technological developments in institutions providing higher education may enhance the student experience. Within this aim, the project's key objectives were to identify factors that influence the success of strategic change in institutions and, in particular, to examine the outcomes of the CLL initiative. It was agreed with the Leadership Foundation that we would address these objectives through a small-scale research project, whose findings would be presented not only directly, in two reports, but also indirectly, through an online toolkit for those involved in leading TEL-focused change in their institutions.

We also emphasise that in conducting the research our remit did not include – and, indeed, the resources available did not stretch to – financial analyses, such as defining degree of success on the basis of the cost of the CLL initiative, measured against the tangible benefits it brought.

Research questions

The project was directed towards addressing two research questions:

1. What are the extent and nature of enhancements to the student experience contributed by CLL projects and by technology-enhanced learning (TEL) more generally?
2. What influences the degree of perceived success of TEL-focused change initiatives in institutions providing higher education?

Sample and participant selection and composition

The intention was that the main organisational structure of the evidence presented would involve cases, whereby a single, discrete institutional-based CLL project served as the unit of analysis. Five such cases were examined. The analysis of each case involved gathering data in the form of the perceptions – conveyed through one-to-one, face-to-face, interviews - of selected key actors: members of the CLL-participating institution who had participated in the CLL project, including the project lead. In some cases the CLL consultant who had been assigned to the institution was also interviewed.

Since the modest resources available for this research project limited the data collection achievable – specifically, the number of interviews - each project case analysis involved no more than six staff interviews. We also interviewed a small number (<5) of students from all but one of the case project institutions, giving us a total student sample of 11 (as we explain in some detail in the full report, student interviewees proved extremely difficult to recruit). We recognise that, as a result of such limitations, the case analyses presented below must be regarded as partial and indicative rather than comprehensive in scope; they represent miniature snapshots rather than expansive, colourful, detailed depictions of the nature and extent of efforts within the higher education sector to enhance student learning through strategic change that is focused on promoting and supporting the use of digital resources.

Data were also collected from 'stand-alone' participants – institutional CLL project leads - who were not associated with any of the five project cases analysed.

Leaving aside the student interviewees, our interviewee selection unfortunately makes for a combined sample that is, to varying degrees, ostensibly supportive of the TEL agenda in higher education – and which must inevitably distort the data that we collected, skewing our findings towards a generally pro-TEL perspective. Our efforts to secure interviews with TEL-sceptics were unsuccessful.

5 Cullen, P. (2014). Changing the Learning Landscape: Connect to the Future – Final evaluation report. London: Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.

Data collection

Data were collected by interviews, whose focus and direction were largely determined by the interviewer's questions, but which were otherwise only loosely structured. Interviews were audio recorded (with interviewees' permission) and recordings transcribed to facilitate analysis. All were conducted face-to-face, to encourage a good interviewer-interviewee rapport. To encourage frankness, the identities of all interviewees and their institutions have been obscured, and pseudonyms are used throughout this report. No interviewee was told whether her/his institution's CLL project would feature or has featured as a case – indeed, not until all data had been collected did we finally select the five institutional projects to be analysed as cases.

Data analysis

Data were analysed manually, through an incrementally reductive process from which key themes (relevant to the research objectives and questions) emerged that illuminated people's experiences, together with their attitudinal responses to these experiences, the bases of these responses, and the implications of these for leading and managing institutional TEL-focused (strategic) change.

In relation to the case projects, analyses were directed at incorporating all research participants' perspectives into the construction of 'stories' framed by contextual backdrops that outlined institutional history and culture, and highlighted priorities, goals, micro-politically influenced dynamics, decision-making processes and outcomes, with the aim of identifying and explaining the nature and extent of TEL-related policy and practice, and progress in effecting strategic change.

Research findings

The research findings are communicated in two forms: conventionally, in this report, and digitally, as an online toolkit. Conceived of and developed in tandem, the two are intended to complement each other; one presenting an analytical narrative, and the other representing a practical resource. The conventionally reported findings appear below, in two main sections: one that presents the five case analyses of selected CLL institutional projects, and one that, drawing upon non-case-specific data, presents students' perspective(s) on TEL. Supplementing these two main sections, other findings drawn from 'stand-alone' data (ie that were not gathered within case analyses) are incorporated into a discussion section, Improving the student experience through TEL-focused strategic change: lessons learned and ways forward.

Before presenting these sections, we first outline the nature, purpose and process involved in constructing the digital resource format of our presentation of findings: the online toolkit.

The online toolkit

Intended as a resource for those leading or supporting institutional TEL-focused strategic change, the online toolkit incorporates our main research findings into a series of questions that serve as a checklist for effective change leadership. Partnering this report, it is intended as a practical, user-focused tool for user groups such as leaders and managers, learning technologists, academic developers and e-learning champions as they prepare for, develop, deliver and evaluate change in their institutions.

The toolkit serves as a summary of what our findings revealed to be the key factors influencing effective TEL-focused change. Entirely research-based, it was developed as we collected and analysed our data, and uses selected quotes from our research participants and extracts from case analyses to underpin and support the guidance offered. It may be accessed via the Leadership Foundation's website at www.lfhe.ac.uk/CLL-ISLO.

The case analyses

Through assuring participants that their and their institutions' identities would be obscured, we have uncovered valuable insights into institutional micro-politics (as reported by our interviewees) and, of particular relevance to this project, the factors that influence – positively and negatively – strategic change initiatives and, more specifically, the take-up of TEL in institutions. Such factors include the roles played by leaders at all levels.

In the much more expansive full report of this research project, each case analysis is presented as a story that outlines the focus and nature of the CLL project in question, and what happened, when, and why, and with what results for its implementation. The factors underpinning successes and failures are outlined, and we include quotes from interviews with key players. In total, over 20,000 words are devoted to the five case stories, which span over 30 pages⁶.

Here - in this abbreviated report - these stories have been replaced with much shortened narrative accounts that are presented as Appendices. In order to inform the analyses of leading change that we present towards the end of the report, we simply outline below key information that conveys something of the range of CLL projects analysed, and of the diverse contexts within which they were implemented, as well as the varied foci that they represented.

Case 1: Voices crying in the wilderness? The frustrations of leading bottom-up change

Based at pre-1992 City Centre University⁷, this CLL project was a bottom-up initiative to design a template for an online module. A small TEL-focused team, comprising mainly junior academics, but also a faculty pro-dean, submitted the application for CLL support with the full approval of the pro-vice-chancellor for teaching and learning. The team worked well with the assigned CLL consultant, who took them out of their comfort zones by expanding their notions of what blended learning involved, and how it could operate in its most radical forms. Described by the consultant as 'completely revolutionary for the institution – and completely revolutionary for the sector ... in [its] design', the psychology module that they developed was considered immensely successful.

⁶ These unabridged, detailed narratives or 'stories' may be accessed in the full report: www.lfhe.ac.uk/Evans5.5

⁷ Fictitious names are used in all references to the research sample.

The module, however, failed to attract much attention beyond the confines of the project group; it was rolled out within one faculty (that of the pro-dean who had been a member of the CLL project team), but it remained completely under the radar of senior management – including the pro-vice-chancellor for teaching and learning who had known of and supported the CLL project.

This therefore became a tale of unfulfilled potential. It involved what was, from all accounts, a successful project resulting from an effective collaboration between a group of highly motivated, committed colleagues and an expert external consultant. It was well executed, and, in productive terms, achieved its goal: the development of a successful online module. It represented what was perceived as ground-breaking course design and delivery, yet the limited reach that the project achieved diluted its potential for kickstarting significant institution-wide pedagogical innovation. This may have been the result of a combination of a naively unambitious impact and dissemination plan; senior management's taking its eye off one of the balls it had watched being thrown up in the air and so failing to follow through where it had landed; and an institutional culture and infrastructure that were not geared up to recognise, celebrate, and capitalise on effective grass roots initiatives.

This case illustrates how bottom-up initiatives that do not enjoy the full backing and active support of senior management risk achieving very limited impact and do little to advance the institutional strategic change agenda.

Case 2: Dancing to different tunes? Disjointed efforts at developing a flexible learning strategy

Six months after the completion of its first CLL project (outlined above) in 2013, City Centre University embarked upon a second one, having bid for support from the second CLL programme call.

The impetus for the second City Centre University project appears to have come from a recently launched institutional agenda – or, in the words of the pro-vice-chancellor for learning and teaching, 'a strategic imperative' - reflecting the vice-chancellor's awareness of the need to embrace technology-enhanced learning. In contrast to the rather narrow focus of the first project, the second project sought more general strategic advice and guidance on how the university might extend its flexible blended learning provision, and on the advantages and disadvantages of a range of technologies and learning models that senior management could consider and evaluate against the institution's needs and priorities.

Graham⁸, the CLL consultant who had supported its first project, was reassigned to City Centre University to support the second project. By all accounts the consultancy did not proceed smoothly, particularly the working relationship between Graham and the institutional CLL project team, which comprised mainly senior academics and administrators, led by the deputy-vice-chancellor.

The situation appears to have been confusing, insofar as the university's priorities and foci changed between submitting their application for CLL support and the commencement of the project. Moreover, the deputy-vice-chancellor was perceived as not really understanding pedagogy or digital learning, and the CLL consultant, Graham, complained of being told one thing by the pro-vice-chancellor for teaching and learning, and another by the deputy-vice-chancellor – who was represented as not really knowing what he wanted from the project, other than a formal consultancy report.

A blended learning working group was set up, at the consultant's suggestion, to address how the institution might best take forward the vice-chancellor's TEL strategic imperative. Within this agenda, prominence was given to the online learning module template that had resulted from project one as, along with the psychology module that had been developed to illustrate its capacity, it was presented as an example of what could be achieved.

It was at this point, through the showcasing of their achievements, that the project one group began to receive recognition, with their work attracting attention on a wider scale than had hitherto occurred. The template and module were proposed by consultant Graham, not only as an example of the kind of development that could be achieved university-wide, but also as a starting point: a model that could be elaborated and extended. In an effort to address the university's TEL strategic imperative, the pro-dean who had been a team member on the first project was then tasked by the pro-vice-chancellor for learning and teaching to roll out the template institution-wide.

8 Pseudonyms are used in all references to individuals and institutions involved in our research.

In the saga of City Centre University's CLL projects, it seemed that progress on the TEL strategic initiative had finally begun. But plans to roll out a single online module template across the university represent a very modest beginning, and, as the lengthier presentations of these case analyses⁹ show, at City Centre University even initiatives kickstarted by the pro-vice-chancellor may easily be thwarted, so it is far too early to stamp a smiley face onto this particular case analysis. What this case does illustrate is that top-down change initiatives do not necessarily work any better than bottom-up ones unless the senior staff leading them fully understand the key policy and practical issues at stake and apply joined-up thinking in recognising and building on earlier achievements. Time will tell if such joined-up thinking has had lasting impact at City Centre University.

Case 3: Getting engaged: developing a sustainable TEL strategy

Case 3 illustrates what is achievable under the 'right' circumstances and conditions.

The project institution is Improved University: a small post-1992 institution that, having grown from being a college of education, has expanded steadily over the last two decades. It is a teaching-focused institution but boasts some pockets of research activity and entered a small proportion of its academics in REF2014.

The impetus for participation in the CLL initiative may be traced back to the deputy vice-chancellor (who, having left Improved University, did not participate in our research). Aware that the university was in danger of lagging behind other institutions in relation to TEL, she apparently asked the director of the Centre for Academic Practice (CAP), Danny, to place TEL at the top of his agenda. So when, a few days later, an email publicising the CLL initiative arrived in Danny's inbox, he seized upon it and referred it to his line manager, Jim – the institution's education quality director, who was a member of the senior management team. Jim then submitted an application for consultancy help in determining how best to move forward the TEL agenda that both they and the deputy vice-chancellor recognised must be addressed.

The more expansive accounts of this case (presented in Appendix 3, and, in the greatest detail, in our full research report) identify some of the micro-political issues that Danny and Jim had to contend with in pursuing the TEL agenda, but, essentially, this was a case of an institution that wanted to engage in TEL, had no substantial experience of having done so, and successfully used the CLL consultancy support to help them on their way. As a result of their participation in the CLL programme, the Improved University colleagues progressed to drafting a preliminary TEL strategy, forming a TEL working group, implementing TEL policies that the consultant had recommended as 'quick wins', and, overall, placing TEL on the institutional agenda. This is a tale of how a determined senior manager (Jim), supported by two equally determined support service heads, drew upon external advice and support to devise and implement a succession of relatively small TEL-related initiatives that would be augmented over the coming months and years.

For Improved University, the value of the CLL initiative was that it sharpened their focus on TEL, pointed them in the direction that was (at that stage in their development) the best one for them to take, supported their enthusiasm with sound advice on how to tackle specific issues, and, above all, galvanised them into action that seems to have been sustained post-CLL. This case is distinct from those of City Centre University (cases 1 and 2) in being led by a very pro-active member of the senior management team who recognised the need for – and the value in – recruiting staff (academics and academic-related) with the requisite expertise and tapping into their skills, enthusiasm and commitment to take their university into the 21st century in relation to engagement with new learning technologies, leaving CAP director Danny to remark: 'I think there's a whole range of challenges and issues facing us ... but, as far as TEL is concerned, I think we're *getting there*'.

Case 4: A winning team? Championing TEL-focused cultural change

Premiership University is a very successful pre-1992 institution that attracts high calibre, international academics and research fellows, has several world-leading departments, and enjoys a vibrant, income-generating research culture that was recognised in REF2014. Its TEL facilities are commensurate with such a profile; it was a relatively early adopter of learning technologies, had an e-learning strategy in place before engaging with the CLL programme, and has a large workforce attached to an extensive range of professional support services directed at taking the TEL – and the wider teaching and learning - agenda forward.

The institution's CLL project application had been led by Alison, the director of one such service: the learning technology unit (LTU). She and her direct report, Donald, decided to apply for support for a CLL project that would provide consultancy advice

9 Presented in the full research report, available at www.lfhe.ac.uk/Evans5.5

on building up an effective cadre of departmental TEL champions, who would promote e-learning and support local capacity building by acting as advisors to departmental colleagues.

There is little of substance to report on Premiership University's project: Team TEL Champions. From all accounts it proceeded well and through its first tranche recruited over a hundred TEL champions across the university. The CLL consultant described it as a 'good and well-conceived project', adding that 'the Premiership University team were excellent'. So, in the wake of an apparently successful - but uneventful - project execution, our attention in this case analysis shifted from the CLL project itself to its outcomes and impact. Reflecting the nature of Team TEL Champions, our focus was wide for, as an integral part of the institution's e-learning strategy, the establishment of a TEL champions network was never intended to be an end in itself; it was directed at creating and sustaining a collegial agency that would promote, enhance and strengthen TEL provision and widen TEL engagement – 'to spearhead change at departmental and faculty level', as Donald explained it - encouraging the development of an institutional culture of digital teaching and learning. It was evidence of such a culture that we sought.

Our findings revealed Premiership University's TEL engagement and achievements to be impressive, overall. Certainly, one or two of our research participants underlined the patchiness of provision – with the student union's sabbatical officer bemoaning academics' reluctance to engage with lecture capture - yet the two TEL champions whom we interviewed conveyed enthusiasm for advancing the TEL agenda, and one who was evidently at the forefront of pioneering digital learning provided examples of his innovative practice.

However, the most striking feature of this institution's evident success was strong, active support from senior management in implementing the TEL-focused strategic change initiative, for Alison and Donald both highlighted the hands-on efforts and engagement of the pro-vice-chancellor, the director of information services, and the director of the Learning and Teaching Development Centre. Of all five cases that we analyse, this is the one that was the least in need of support from the CLL initiative, for most of the knowledge and support needed to bring about the strategic change was readily available in-house and was utilised effectively. This is a case of a HEI whose participation in a CLL project probably made little impact on its capacity to enhance student learning; that capacity was already there. But what this case analysis has done is reveal something of the conditions and circumstances that make for effective leadership of TEL-focused strategic change: a shared vision; committed colleagues; a well-maintained infrastructure; a good knowledge and understanding of learning technologies; a good grasp of the cultural context(s) within which the change must take place; and, most significantly, the full support of senior management, who were visibly championing - and sharing the driving of – the ongoing change effort. Most of these were evidently in fairly abundant supply at Premiership University, so the value of this case analysis has been to expose, by implicit contrast, their absence in the HEIs featured in the other case analyses, and to serve as a yardstick against which those case narratives may be measured.

Case 5: Fighting competing priorities: putting TEL on the institutional agenda

This case analyses a CLL project at pre-1992 Prestigious University. The idea for the specific project came out of discussion among the learning technology support (LTS) team of six; they settled on requesting support for a project focused on three distance learning courses, located in three departments.

With what was, from all accounts, minimal input from the pro-vice-chancellor for student education (one e-learning advisor described the PVC as 'the *official* sponsor' of the project), the LTS team identified the specific issues and questions that they wanted to be a key focus of the CLL project, including: how could academics teaching the blended learning courses make best use of the limited face-to-face time available to them? How could networks within the student cohort best be developed to promote networked learning? Should the current policy of postal distribution of textbooks be retained – or are there more efficient means of distributing set texts? Do distance learning students *want* e-delivery of set texts, or do they prefer to receive hard copy books? If e-format books are introduced, should they be in standard format, or compatible with students' own diverse devices?

An online learning expert consultant was assigned to work with the Prestigious University e-learning director and her LTS team. The key feature of the project was a qualitative survey, aimed at uncovering students' lived experiences: what it felt like to be a Prestigious University distance learner. This achieved its aims and prompted modifications and enhancements to the delivery of distance learning. Yet the project was also intended to create a ripple effect by raising the profile of distance learning within the institutional teaching and learning strategy and, from this, to raise awareness at senior management level of the potential of TEL, and to kickstart a TEL-focused strategic change initiative.

The much hoped-for agenda-shifting CLL legacy apparently failed to materialise. The e-learning director expressed her disappointment and frustration at the slow progress being made in updating the university's e-learning strategy. The key problems, she felt, were that the pro-vice-chancellor for student education was not fully on board. Moreover, underlying this ambivalence on the part of senior management, was the university's preoccupation with what was clearly a competing priority: research. A member of the LTS team remarked, 'we're a research-led university, so research always trumps teaching'; another complained: 'the digital learning instrument is not very high up the university priority'.

But the e-learning director realised the potential of a valuable weapon: student opinion. What ensued was a project devised by the LTS team to systematically seek the views of students from across the whole university on their learning and study-related experiences. Employing and training students to run focus student groups and report back their findings, the team hoped that the data gathered through this exercise would provide the ammunition needed to fight the complacency that underpinned resistance to change and scepticism about TEL. The e-learning director outlined the key findings of project Students Speaking:

"A lot of it was: 'Yes, we want lecture capture' - because Prestigious University still doesn't provide that. ... And there was generally a claim for more consistency. ... And we can say [the project was] robust because we've got the statistics to show that it's representative of the cohort as a whole, and also we've managed to retain the students' own words."

(E-learning director)

The Students Speaking project represents a bottom-up attempt, on the part of a resourceful and enthusiastic potential change agent, to circumvent the barriers that had been placed in her way as she tried to promote the wider take-up of TEL and put it on her university's strategic change agenda. It was a postscript to the CLL project, and it was one of its legacies. What progress it will achieve at Prestigious University remains to be seen; it is early days, but the last time we spoke to her, the e-learning director was optimistic about the waves it was making in some quarters. Most significantly, it has succeeded in putting TEL on the agenda of the university's teaching and learning committee.

The student voice

"I think it would be nice for the institution to actually do a lot more market research on what the students are thinking and how they behave, because I think we've got internal models of what the students do and how they act, but I think they're based on suspicion rather than actually hearing their voices."

(TEL champion, Premiership University)

Student participation was intended as a core feature of the CLL initiative; a requirement that was made explicit on much of the official CLL documentation that passed between the Leadership Foundation (representing the partners that delivered the initiative) and the institutions participating in the programme. Despite this explicit requirement, we found student engagement in CLL projects to have been patchy. Often it was minimal. It seemed that, if indeed they had been included in their institutions' strategic conversations, in many cases student representatives thereafter had little or no further consultative involvement in the ensuing projects. In this respect, then - and evidently for practical reasons - a key tenet of the spirit of the CLL initiative often became overshadowed or ignored. Students, it seems - and this impression is strongly supported by the evidence not only of our own experiences of trying to engage students in our research, but also by the data provided by the students we did eventually manage to 'pin down' and interview - have, for the most part, no real appetite for involvement in strategic decision-making in relation to TEL.

This section focuses on the student voice in relation not only to the CLL initiative and its legacy, but also to TEL more generally. Below, we outline briefly what students evidently want and don't want; what they like and dislike about TEL.

Since precisely what is meant by TEL remains contested in the discourse in the field¹⁰, to maximise construct validity¹¹ every one of the 11 interviews with students began with a brief explanation of what we mean by 'technology-enhanced learning' - that we apply the term widely, to include the use of 'new' or digital technologies not only to course delivery and students' learning,

10 Kirkwood, A. & Price, L. (2014). Technology-enhanced learning and teaching in higher education: what is 'enhanced' and how do we know? A critical literature review. *Learning, Media and Technology* 39(1): 6-36.

11 Evans, L. (2002). *Reflective practice in educational research: developing advanced skills*. London: Continuum.

but also to the administrative-related elements of their study-related lives, such as coursework submission and feedback and communications with, and information circulated by, university staff. Interviewees were then asked to evaluate, overall, the TEL provision at their institutions.

Responses were generally and broadly positive (with occasional qualifications diluting the positivity), indicating a student body that, on the whole, is relatively satisfied with the TEL facilities and provision that they encounter. These findings are consistent with those of studies that incorporate a focus on student satisfaction more widely¹².

The following are illustrative of our interviewees' comments:

"I would rate the TEL provision at [my university] as good."

(Male undergraduate student, social sciences, pre-1992 university)

"I'm very satisfied with the TEL here, yes."

(Female undergraduate student, science, post-1992 university)

"The TEL facilities aren't bad, but I don't think they're fantastic."

(Male undergraduate student, arts and humanities, post-1992 university)

Yet from the vantage point of those student representatives privileged to have a broader perspective – student union sabbatical officers – TEL provision in their institutions was recognised as very variable. The education officer from pre-1992 Premiership University's student union (featured in case 4) described his institution's provision as 'varied' and representing the full spectrum of teaching provision, from technology-enhanced to technology-free. Similarly, the education officer from a post-1992 university's student union highlighted variability as a key feature of his university's provision:

"Provision very much varies from faculty to faculty. ... I know flipped lectures are in practice in certain modules across the university¹³ – particularly in the Business School; they're very screwed on with trying anything new to benefit the students. Then you look across the board, at, say, for example, a history module; that might just be the stereotypical four hours in a lecture room, just sat there, listening, and not doing very much."

(Students union's education sabbatical officer, post-1992 university)

Convenience emerged as a key factor in students' evaluations: facilities that make their lives easier are evidently considered enhancements, whilst anything that adds complexity or creates inconvenience is a source of irritation, frustration or dissatisfaction. Many students readily provided examples of convenience-related enhancements (including the facility of online coursework submission); some related to the availability and ease of accessing learning resources:

"We have Desktop Anywhere, which I never had for my undergraduate degree. And on my course there's a lot of statistics and I need access to the programmes, and it just means I can do it anywhere, basically. I think it is really good – just because I don't run the risk of losing work, because it's all on the system."

(Female postgraduate student, psychology, pre-1992 university)

"All of our readings are on the VLE – all of our lecturers make sure that all of the reading is available online. Even if it's a book it'll be photocopied; everything's available online. All the extended reading's online, as well. I do go to the library, but I probably get most of my reading online."

(Female postgraduate student, social studies, pre-1992 university)

"Library resources are all very good. E-books and journals are accessed now. The search engine was improved last year and is now a lot easier. Not only can you look for journals, you can also look for e-books. I'd say it's a really good system. Obviously, I use that alongside Google Scholar. It's accessible 24/7."

(Female undergraduate student, biology, post-1992 university)

12 Yorke, M. & Longden, B. (2008). The first-year experience of higher education in the UK: Final report. York: Higher Education Academy.

13 It became evident as the interview with this student progressed that he applied the term 'flipped lecture' simply to denote the uploading, in advance of lectures, of PowerPoint slides to be used in the lectures.

Students are evidently very enthusiastic about lecture capture – even if they have not yet experienced it first-hand – and perceive it as an unqualified (potential) enhancement to their study-related lives. An engineering student outlined what he saw as its key advantages in terms of accessibility of taught content:

“A lot of what the lecturer says during the lecture isn’t apparent anywhere in the lecture notes or online anywhere, so there’s nowhere else you can access it, and to be successful in your coursework and your exams, you had to have been there. Now, I find I can’t work well in the morning – that’s because I’m not getting enough sleep, or whatever – and different people work best at different times during the day. So I feel that shoving everyone into a 9am to 10am session, and expecting everyone to absorb the same amount that you’d expect from the best student – I don’t think that’s a workable model. Having the lecture recorded, you can always go back and check it.”

(Male postgraduate student, engineering, pre-1992 university)

Similarly, an undergraduate student in a pre-1992 university was appreciative of the flexibility and convenience in terms of attendance that lecture capture offered:

“Some of the lecturers also use the online system to upload lecture cast – the video and audio recording of the lecture. That has, sort of, inspired me to miss one or two lectures, because you can literally watch the lecture online, and it is quite good if you can’t make it.”

An American visiting undergraduate student spending a semester at a UK university commented, without being prompted, on the convenience that lecture capture potentially offers students:

“The one thing I will say is that this [UK] university has lecture cast, which we don’t have at my [US Ivy League] home university. None of my courses here have it, but I have friends who have it and they can just watch the lecture online – which seems convenient.”

(Visiting American undergraduate student, pre-1992 university)

And a student union sabbatical officer highlighted academics’ under-use of lecture capture as an issue that provokes students’ dissatisfaction, and that he is frequently asked to address:

“I’m sure everyone would say, ‘Yes’ to lecture cast – pre-recorded lectures. I’m sure they would want live streaming of lectures – that’s something the university could explore. The students find it very frustrating and irritating when academics don’t use lecture capture – especially when you’re in a lecture room where you have the facilities and are not making use of them. I get quite a few emails saying, ‘Why don’t I have lecture cast?’, and I have a template for my response, because I get so many.”

(Student union sabbatical officer, pre-1992 university)

He went on to offer a more personal perspective on the convenience aspect of lecture capture:

Interviewer: *“Has lecture cast been available to you, as a student?”*

Student union sabbatical officer: *“Yes, on two out of the 24 modules on my course.”*

Interviewer: *“And how did you most typically use it yourself? Did it encourage you to miss lectures?”*

Sabbatical officer: *“The morning sessions I didn’t go to, so I had to go back and use the recordings. But even if I was in the lecture – because note-taking can vary a lot; sometimes you don’t understand your own notes, and you need to go back and think: What did I actually mean when I wrote this? – so that’s something that lecture recording really helped me out with.”*

The point was also made that it sometimes requires several lecture recording replays for students to make sense of the pronunciation of some academics whose first language is not English.

Yet it is important to emphasise that few of our student interviewees had direct experience of lecture capture; their comments were, for the most part, based on their perceptions of what they imagined or expected it could offer. Until it becomes a more ubiquitous feature of higher education provision in the UK, evaluations of its capacity for enhancing learning and influencing study patterns and behaviour will inevitably incorporate a degree of conjecture and assumption.

In the digital world fora such as online chat rooms, wikis and blogs appear to have much potential for promoting and increasing student learning through interaction with peers and tutors, yet our findings suggest that students have little appetite for participating in them. All except one of our student interviewees responded 'No' to being asked if they engage in course-related online discussion fora, and one of the student union officers we interviewed confirmed that, at his university, chat rooms are seldom visited:

"All the Moodle discussion forums are empty. Moodle's just seen as: this is where I get my lecture notes from, and this is where I sometimes upload my coursework. It might be that, if there was a different platform – something more tailored to discussion – maybe then it would be used. I don't know what the answer is, but the underlying issue is: it's a big challenge trying to find out what students want."

(Student union sabbatical officer, pre-1992 university)

The visiting American student offered an interesting perspective on why chat room provision evidently features less in his home university than in his host pre-1992 UK university:

Interviewer: *"Do any of your courses here at [X] University have follow-up chat rooms or wikis, or anything like that?"*

Visiting American student: *"One of my courses has a chat room, for students who're having issues, but I've never gone on it."*

Interviewer: *"Do students like chatrooms?"*

Student: *"I'm personally not that interested in them, and I don't know anyone who has been. At [US Ivy League university] I think it's easier to meet up with classmates and work interactively – everybody lives close to each other, whereas, here, people live further apart and it's not as easy, so maybe chat rooms would be more helpful here. But only one of my classes here has one."*

If students' learning is to be supported and enhanced by the kinds of discursive exchanges that academics have long considered valuable elements of course delivery, then our data suggest the likelihood that this will continue to be achieved principally through traditional, tried-and-trusted fora rather than through their 21st century digital equivalents, unless student engagement and enthusiasm are successfully harnessed through the kinds of media and platforms that strike a chord with them. For their part, students have an important role to play in ensuring that those who work together to design and deliver their courses – principally, academics (sometimes supported by learning technologists) – are aware of their study-related needs, and of what is likely to spark their interest and motivate them, as well as what holds little allure or attraction for them. To be effective, such communication is dependent upon students making their views known vociferously. But how realistic is this? We asked all of our student interviewees if they – the student body – have a voice within their institutions.

All affirmed that there were institutional mechanisms in place, at various levels and through various routes (eg departmental level; at programme or module level; through the student union), for them to have their say, but some added that, in reality, the wheels of change seem to move very slowly. Yet our findings also suggest that, for the most part, students are relatively uninterested in making their voices heard. We detected among our interviewees a lack of interest that borders on apathy in communicating their views to those with the capacity to make changes. Indeed, one of the student union sabbatical officers quoted above highlighted student apathy as a major frustration in his role:

"It doesn't help that students themselves are quite apathetic to anything the university has to say. In the end-of-module feedback forms most people will quickly just tick four out of five for everything, just so they can go to lunch!"

(Student union sabbatical officer, pre-1992 university)

Supporting his view that students are generally uninterested in engaging with the university's TEL-focused strategic change initiative, he provided an example of their apathy:

"The e-learning team had this huge event for students called DigiScene a few months ago, and they thought it would be something that loads of people would attend – it was a three-day event. And you could count on one hand how many students actually turned up. Only about three or four people actually came, and they were expecting about a hundred. To me, that means: either the stuff they produced just was not tailored to students, or students just didn't care about what they had to offer...or it was just the wrong time."

(Student union sabbatical officer, pre-1992 university)

Perhaps one reason for such apparent apathy is that – as our findings strongly suggest – the student body is relatively satisfied with TEL provision. Asked if they could think of any TEL-related facility, or provision, or practice that they would like to be available or extended to them, or that they felt could enhance their learning experience, very few interviewees were able to identify anything – live streaming of lectures was more or less the only suggestion (from a single interviewee).

Students, it seems, are easy to please. For the most part, they seem to want little more than they already have, in terms of TEL provision and facilities. Perhaps their relative satisfaction stems from their being sufficiently equipped, digitally, in their personal lives that they find themselves able to manage perfectly well by overlapping or merging their personal digital lives with their study-related lives.

This raises the question of how universities can better engage with students to capitalise on their digital literacy towards a shared vision of spreading technological innovation to effectively enhance the learning environment.

Improving the student experience through TEL-focused strategic change: lessons learned and ways forward

To what extent, then, and in what ways, are English HEIs incorporating TEL into their strategic change agendas, and with what effects on provision directed towards improving the student experience? And, in relation to these issues, what has been the nature and extent of the contribution of the CLL initiative?

In this section we address these questions in the light of our research findings and draw out lessons to be learned about TEL-focused strategic change: what contributes to, and what undermines, its success – and how such success may be defined and measured.

From ‘traditional’ to digital: the evolving landscape of higher education pedagogy

It is now a given that, in the words of Fullan and Scott, within the higher education sector ‘the IT revolution is creating new expectations and opportunities for how students want to and can learn’¹⁴. Yet expectations and opportunities do not equate to provision, and our findings have revealed a fairly broad spectrum of commitment to a TEL agenda, and an even broader one of TEL initiatives in practice. Of the four institutions that feature in our case analyses (cases 1-5) only one – Premiership University – could boast the infrastructure, capacity, support from senior management, strategic vision, and degree of TEL provision that was in place and operational, to justify categorising it as something of a sector leader. Yet even here – as our findings show – provision was found to be patchy and commitment levels varied.

Drawing upon our full dataset, we present below snapshots of other HEIs (which were not analysed as cases) whose CLL project institutional leads portrayed them as similarly TEL-focused. Yet our findings – particularly those presented in cases 1-3 and 5 – clearly indicate that some English HEIs still have a long way to go to catch up with such TEL-focused institutions. It is evident that, across the English higher education sector¹⁵, changing the higher education learning landscape is not guaranteed to be a quick or an easy process. Depending on the HEI, it may involve more evolution than revolution.

Our research data were drawn from HEIs that had participated in the CLL initiative, which implies a commitment of some degree to TEL (even if this was on the part of only a small number of people). Moreover, reluctance to participate in our research on the part of people who are sceptical or have reservations about TEL provision in their institutions has unfortunately left us with a skewed sample that is relatively pro-TEL. Despite this sampling bias, only one of our case HEIs (Premiership University) had formulated a TEL strategy before participating in the CLL initiative¹⁶. The institution that features in cases 1 and 2 had recently made TEL a ‘strategic imperative’ (which the pro-vice-chancellor distinguished from having developed a TEL strategy), but was evidently still grappling with the issue of how best to embed TEL provision within its culture; in the case 3 institution, Improved University, a strategy was being drafted as a result of the institution’s CLL participation, but none of the colleagues who had collaborated on its development felt sufficiently competent in or knowledgeable about TEL to be confident that they were proceeding on the right track; and in Prestigious University (case 5) a group of colleagues who were pushing forward the TEL agenda were struggling to engage senior management in widening their focus from one that was fixed squarely on research excellence.

Added to these cases are those of English HEIs from whose employees we gathered data, but that we decided not to analyse and present as cases. Most of these – according to their CLL institutional project leads who were our interviewees – had already demonstrated considerable commitment to TEL before engaging with the CLL initiative and had undertaken TEL-focused strategic change that was yielding relatively impressive results. In a post-1992 university, for example, the head of e-learning explained his institution’s considered and reflective approach to developing its TEL provision:

14 Fullan, M. & Scott, G. (2009). *Turnaround leadership for higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass (p7).

15 The CLL initiative was not UK-wide in scope; it focused only on England.

16 We interpret progress in developing a strategy as broadly illustrative, rather than unequivocally indicative, of commitment to TEL; we recognise that some institutions may decide not to formulate a TEL strategy – as was the case with two institutions that participated in the CLL programme.

*“So, one of my roles is to write an e-learning strategy. Approximately every five years we revisit our e-learning strategy, and alongside that sits an annual e-learning implementation plan, which the faculties write now - so they respond to that strategy and say what they’re doing to do. So, as part of that strategy, we’ve got various aims within it, and one of the aims relates to innovation and changing and exploring. And so this idea [for our CLL project] was met with one of those strategic aims, which was to experiment with technology and explore the impact of that. The reason is that we’re very much more interested in having technology implementation that’s research-informed, rather than just: ‘Well, **that** looks like a good bit of kit! Let’s get it in there!’ ... So I think we recognise that we can have all the functionality in the world but if it’s not usable, it’s not going to be used.”*

(Head of e-learning, post-1992 university)

The pro-vice-chancellor for teaching and learning at another post-1992 university outlined his institution’s TEL-focused vision and achievements that had been in place before their engagement with the CLL initiative:

“We had a vision – ‘we’ being ‘me’ - and we had a vision of what could the campus look like four or five years down the line with technology. ... But we also knew that we were using Panopto, we were using Camtasia, we were using different types of activities ... And I was interested in creating a set of parameters within which all programmes will operate, consistently, but flexibly and variably. ... So the idea was: how do we bring centralisation to it, but allowing some flexibility?”

(Pro-vice-chancellor, post-1992 university)

And the deputy-vice-chancellor at yet another post-1992 university first of all outlined his institution’s current strategic approach to TEL:

*“I think in our next teaching and learning strategy, we’ll commit, within the three years that follow that, to 20% of the classrooms being flipped. The very best example in the world at the moment is a Korean university who are claiming to have flipped...they’re claiming to be the first flipped university. It turns out they’ve done about 96 modules out of 2,500, so I think that’s quite a long way off being fully flipped! But I understand what they’re saying, and I think I have an advantage in...by encouraging modules to collapse into module **projects** ... I can encourage a more coherent assessment strategy.”*

(Deputy-vice-chancellor, post-1992 university)

He then spoke specifically about his university’s involvement in the CLL initiative, which had resulted in a strategic conversation with a consultant, who had then apparently advised him that participation in a CLL project could do nothing to enhance the university’s already impressive, sector-leading, TEL provision:

Deputy-vice-chancellor: “We sent a, sort of, an agenda, and asked for [the CLL consultant] to meet with people in our e-learning service, in our online learning, so: Moodle, VLE people, the learning development team, etc. ... The request that we made was about effectively auditing where we were on a scale of technology-supported learning effectively. ... And, anyway, the strategic conversation went in such a direction...we talked about what we did, the consultant asked a series of questions, and it resulted in a, sort of, fairly simple statement that we were ahead of the game, in terms of thinking, in the way we were going, and that he was fascinated by what we were doing. And therefore it ended up in rather the wrong direction of conversation (laughs).”

Interviewer: *“Were you expecting that?”*

*Deputy-vice-chancellor: “No, I wasn’t; not at all. I was expecting to be rather a long way **behind** - and whilst it’s always nice to know that you’re thinking in line with the sector, but perhaps a **little** ahead, when you’re hoping to get something out of it, it didn’t quite go the way we expected. I’m not saying we didn’t get **anything** out of the engagement - not at all. But it **is** the reason we didn’t take up the other consultancy days because the consultant’s report was very clear that there was nowhere further that that he could take us, and he wasn’t aware, I don’t think, of anyone who would’ve been able to take us on easily that was in the Leadership Foundation pod. ... But, we’re **not** very far ahead. We’re not ahead at **all**, really, I don’t think. We use an online learning environment in a fairly standard and, sort of, staid sort of way. I’d like to go much further. We were thinking about MOOCs and flipped classrooms, and all of those sorts of buzzwords, but we were thinking about them in buzzword territory, rather than in practice. ... We went out a little bit further down the line towards practice, but not much. What I think the consultant was impressed by was the fact that the university was willing to invest some **serious** amounts of money in technology-supported learning.”*

Compared with some of the scenarios presented in our case analyses, these outline accounts of three HEIs' approaches to, and strategies for developing, TEL – particularly the third one - stand out as impressive. Despite the reservations expressed by that institution's deputy-vice-chancellor about the accuracy with which his university's activity had been evaluated, these snapshots – for that is all they are – smack of innovative thinking, vision, focus and commitment that stand out as being beyond what seems, within the English higher education sector, to be state-of-the-art; certainly, they surpass the overall institutional TEL-focused achievements outlined in case analyses 1-3 and 5.

But what accounts for these three universities' apparent 'success' in terms of prominent TEL-focused activity? And, bringing into the equation *all* of our findings – including the five case analyses - what accounts for the variability in relation to TEL provision and strategic engagement between the HEIs that featured in our research? This is a variability that is mirrored on a larger scale, evident in approaches to and implementation of e-learning in HEIs across Europe, which, it is suggested, 'may have to do with the [institutional] profile and mission, availability of resources and access to additional funding, the focus on certain subject areas, the type of students they attract, and different stages of experience in e-learning and paces of technology adoption, also due to openness of staff and their particular skills'¹⁷. In English HEIs – the focus of our research - do progress and achievements depend on (inter-related) factors such as resources, overall institutional vision and priorities, university mission group, student demographics, institutional culture, or leadership and management? For institutions trying to develop or enhance their TEL provision – or for individuals who wish to champion such development or enhancement - what lessons may be learned from our research findings?

We begin addressing these questions, in part, by examining the extant knowledge base, drawing upon selected relevant literature in the field to inform our analyses.

Leading and managing change: analyses of our findings

We start with the case of the post-1992 university that the CLL consultant deemed too innovative to be helped by participation in a CLL project. For ease of reference we call this Innovative University, and its deputy-vice-chancellor, Mick. Limited to drawing upon the information that Mick conveyed during a one-and-a-half-hour interview, we have identified four features of his leadership that struck us as potential facilitators of the TEL-focused strategic change that he appears, from his own account, to have driven in his university. These are his seniority and status; knowledge of 'new' learning technologies and digital resources and of the TEL field; knowledge and understanding of his institution and its people; and vision for TEL in his university. Do these features hold the key to effective TEL-focused strategic change leadership? Stripped of Mick's personal agential ownership or application of them, could they, appropriated by other leaders of change, make for the kinds of digital enhancements to students' learning and experiences that appear to have been achieved at Innovative University, and which so impressed the CLL consultant?

To address these questions we examine each feature in turn below, outlining the nature and extent of its broader potential for supporting a TEL agenda.

Seniority and status as vehicles for driving change

As the deputy-vice-chancellor, in his institution Mick was second in seniority and status only to the vice-chancellor herself. This is of great importance; his active leadership of the institutional TEL change agenda conveyed an unambiguous message – particularly to staff – that TEL is taken very seriously at the very top. The need to have TEL strategic change spearheaded by senior leaders and managers is evidently widely recognised in HEIs; over 80% of the European universities recently surveyed implied by their responses that strategic responsibility for TEL lay with senior staff such as heads of e-learning centres, vice-rectors, or special advisors to institutional heads. The survey report interprets these data as evidence that TEL is being taken very seriously within European universities¹⁸.

This recognition of the importance of senior leadership in driving TEL-focused strategic change was shared by our interviewees. Academic developer, Danny, for example, attributed the impetus behind Improved University's strategic change agenda (see case 3) to what he saw as the very significant intervention of the deputy-vice-chancellor – and implied that more would probably have been achieved if the vice-chancellor himself had publicised his support of the TEL agenda:

17 Gaebel, M., Kupriyanova, V., Morais, R. & Colucci, E. (2014). E-learning in European higher education institutions: results of a mapping survey conducted October–December 2013. Brussels: European University Association (p9).

18 Ibid (p41).

“We can guess that if the vice-chancellor had been there, and been involved...such is his power and his influence, that that would've pushed it [TEL] up even higher [on the agenda]. We've said that to him before: 'If you decide that this is a key priority, everyone will buy into it.'”

(CAP director, Improved University)

Contrast this level of engagement on the part of Improved University's senior management to the 'nominal' leadership and support of the pro-vice-chancellor at Prestigious University (case 5) who, to the disappointment and frustration of the e-learning director, perceives learning technologies, we were told, 'just like a utility' or as 'an add-on'. Contrast it, too, to the limited involvement of senior management (specifically, the pro-vice-chancellor) in the bottom-up online learning module development at City Centre University, described in case 1, prompting the junior colleagues who had led the project to complain that their efforts and achievements had gone unnoticed and were not being capitalised on. Yet where senior management proactively champions the TEL strategic change agenda – and, moreover, is perceived to be heavily involved in driving it, as seems to have occurred in Premiership University (case 4) – the institutional culture, notwithstanding inevitable pockets of resistance, begins to shift in line with the vision enshrined in the strategy, as staff gradually come to accept the importance and value of being 'on message'. It is probably no accident that Premiership University, which, out of all four HEIs to feature in our case analyses, had evidently made the greatest progress towards embedding TEL within its culture, was also the one with the most visibly committed and TEL-supportive senior managers (though we accept that other factors – such as this institution's relatively abundant resources – undoubtedly influenced the progress it achieved). In contrast to the situation outlined in case 2, where City Centre University's two senior managers were pulling in different directions, Premiership University's senior management had got its act together and was delivering it to script.

The importance of committed senior leadership has long been recognised by key analysts of transformational change¹⁹. Yet, whilst Michael Fullan argues that in the leadership of change 'neither centralization nor decentralization work (both top-down and bottom-up strategies are necessary)²⁰, if Kotter's reasoning is sound, it points to a key factor that is often lacking from bottom-up change initiatives of the kind described in case 1: a focus on *systemic* change. At City Centre University (case 1) a group of committed and enthusiastic colleagues – most of them junior academics – developed what was considered by most of those who encountered it as a mould-breaking online module that the CLL consultant described as 'revolutionary for the sector'. Yet despite this project's pioneering, ground-breaking nature it remained for many months an unnoticed, isolated pocket of innovative practice. It did not – to use Kotter's words²¹ – create a new *system* within the institution. For it to do so, it would have had to have been championed by a senior leader with the influence and the motivation to embed it within, or to build around it, a strategic change initiative. At Premiership University (case 4), in contrast, the Team TEL Champions CLL project – and, indeed, the wider TEL-focused changes initiated by the Learning Technology Unit – were not only embedded within the institution's e-learning strategy, but, to give them additional credibility, also had the full weight behind them of the recently appointed pro-vice-chancellor and two other highly significant senior managers.

Indeed, it may be no coincidence that Premiership University's very supportive senior leadership represented three relatively recent appointees. Highlighting the importance of visionary leadership as a driver of change, it has been noted that: 'Transformations often begin, and begin well, when an organization has a *new head who is a good leader and who sees the need for a major change*'²². The success of TEL-focused strategic change initiatives in HEIs may therefore be dependent, to some extent at least, on leadership that is able to offer new perspectives, bringing the 'breath of fresh air' that Alison, the head of Premiership University's LTU, associated with the leadership shown by pro-vice-chancellor, Howard, who helped her drive forward the e-learning strategy.

As was implied by several of our interviewees, the more senior the leader lending her/his support to a change initiative, the more influence that leader generally has within the institution, and the wider is likely to be the take-up of the change initiative. Danny, at Improved University (case 3), for example, commented: 'I think, given the way our university works, the key ingredients [of successful strategic change] are: the more senior – the more visible presence a senior member of the institution has - the more chance you have that it'll be taken on board'. Consistent with this reasoning - though it is presented in terminology that reflects the business context within which it was developed - Kotter's analysis highlights the importance in the strategic change process of supporters' seniority and status:

19 Kotter, P. (1995). Leading change: why transformation efforts fail. Harvard Business Review March–April 1995 59–67 (p60).

20 Fullan, M. (1993.) Changes forces. London: Falmer Press (p22).

21 Kotter, P. (1995). Leading change: why transformation efforts fail. Harvard Business Review March–April 1995 59–67

22 Kotter, P. (1995). Leading change: why transformation efforts fail. Harvard Business Review March–April 1995 59–67 (p60, emphasis added).

"It is often said that major change is impossible unless the head of the organisation is an active supporter. What I am talking about goes far beyond that. In successful transformations, the chairman or president or division general manager, plus another 5 or 15 or 50 people, come together and develop a shared commitment to excellent performance through renewal. In my experience, this group never includes all of the company's most senior executives because some people just won't buy in, at least not at first. But in the most successful cases, the coalition is always pretty powerful – in terms of titles, information and expertise, reputations and relationships ... Senior managers always form the core of the group."²³

With Mick driving it, then, the TEL-focused strategic change agenda at Innovative University has an excellent chance of being realised, because of his influence within the university. But what also stood out in Mick's interview – and which must clearly be an advantage in his driving of that change agenda – is his evident knowledge and understanding of the field.

TEL-related knowledge and expertise: the basis of informed decision-making

In his interview Mick exuded an impressive grasp of learning technologies, the pedagogy underpinning them, and the latest developments, worldwide, in TEL adoption within higher education. Referring to examples of what he believed to be pioneering adoptions of learning technologies at UK and overseas universities, he came across as being 'on the ball'. In contrast, the deputy-vice-chancellor at City Centre University (case 2) charged with leading the institution's second CLL project, was described thus by his senior management colleague, the pro-vice-chancellor for teaching and learning: 'the DVC was leading it because it was agreed that it was an important piece of university work, but *actually he didn't know very much about this - he's not somebody ... who is embedded in pedagogy* - so he came with a different focus'²⁴. There is an important implicit message embedded in this evaluation of the City Centre University deputy-vice-chancellor's leadership of the CLL project, which becomes more apparent on examining the full case 2 narrative²⁵: despite the need for high profile leadership, it is potentially problematic to embark upon TEL-focused strategic change without a sound understanding of the issues surrounding the change focus. Although the CLL consultant summarised it as 'by-the-skin-of-our-teeth-successful!', the project featured in case 2 is evidently the least successful of all the five cases analysed. This was largely because the university's senior management approached this strategic change opportunity with a poorly co-ordinated sense of the direction in which the project could go, which, in turn, was exacerbated by the institutional project lead's – the deputy-vice-chancellor's – evident inadequate grasp of the TEL landscape and of higher education pedagogy more widely.

Whilst it is clearly helpful, it is not essential, however – nor is it realistic – that all senior leaders or managers supporting and championing TEL-focused strategic change have the kind of encyclopaedic knowledge or familiarity with the field that Mick demonstrated. But it is essential that someone on the team driving the change initiative has sufficient knowledge and expertise to make informed decisions and advise other team members, and the effective senior leader will recognise such expertise and utilise it. In cases where this expertise and knowledge are absent within the university they will need to be pulled in from external sources. At Premiership University (case 4) the TEL experts were Alison and Donald; at Prestigious University (case 5) they were the e-learning director and her team; at Improved University the institutional project team had to rely upon the CLL consultant to fill in the gaps in their own knowledge and were happy to accept her advice. Such specialist consultancy advice was also available to City Centre University for both projects one and two (cases 1 and 2 respectively), but a key distinction between project one – which the CLL consultant deemed to have been '*really successful*' – and project two, which was impoverished by its initially resulting in very limited change, could lie in the appropriation and use of TEL-related expertise in each. Project one involved, from the start, not only TEL experts in the form of the institution's own learning technologist and two of its appointed departmental e-learning champions, it also involved the consultant's expertise, which the City Centre University team appreciated and utilised effectively. Project two, in contrast, *initially* failed not only to draw upon this in-house expertise – the project one team – but also to make best use of the CLL consultant's expertise. Only when this knowledge base was eventually tapped, with the original project one team's being reconvened, did the project begin to head in the direction of useful change, when the pro-vice-chancellor stepped in and tasked faculty pro-dean, Freda, with rolling out project one's online module template across the university.

Knowledge and understanding of the institution, its culture and its people

Having been employed at Innovative University for over 20 years, Mick knew it well. He had seen – and been involved in – its growth and evolution, and understood the contextual background and the history that had shaped and determined the nature of the institution. But, more significantly, he spoke of keeping fresh this knowledge and understanding. To him, a key institutional

23 Kotter, P. (1995). Leading change: why transformation efforts fail. Harvard Business Review March–April 1995 59–67 (p62, emphasis added).

24 Extract from anonymised transcript of interview with the City Centre University pro-vice-chancellor (emphases added).

25 Much more extensive analyses of case analyses 1–5 are presented in the longer research report, accessible at: www.lfhe.ac.uk/Evans5.5

constituency whose needs, interests and expectations should inform the TEL strategic agenda are Innovative University's students. He explained:

"I spend a lot of time with the student union talking to them about how students use technology in their learning lives ... I wander round and I, sort of, sit next to students in the library and have conversations. And - once they get over the nutter-talking-to-them-type problem - they're really very open, and very much more engaged in that situation than most others. So, yeah, I'll talk to student union meetings; I'll go to student rep meetings."

He also claimed to engage regularly with the academics delivering taught courses:

"I talk to faculty boards and things like that about [TEL] because they have a different view [from students]. ... Everything we do is based on course teams for teaching and learning ... So I engage with course teams through those sorts of processes."

At Premiership University, too, as a member of the LTU explained, the e-learning strategy was purported to be informed by knowledge of what students wanted, derived from engagement with student representatives:

"It's in response to the student demand, and I think a lot of the stuff we've been doing since I've been here - about four or five years - has been a kind of a bottom-up response to what the students want."

(Donald, LTU member, Premiership University)

This kind of engagement – with those whose lives will be most affected by any change initiatives, and those who must be involved in implementing such change - represents the kind of semi-formal or informal knowledge-seeking networks that effective change leaders and managers develop, to ensure that their decision-making is appropriately informed²⁶. Such networks are evident in most of our case study narratives – in the TEL working group set up by education quality director Jim at Improved University (case 3), to inform the development of the e-learning strategy; in the extended, unofficial, blended learning working group that CLL consultant Graham eventually initiated at City Centre University (case 2) to break the deadlock in progressing an e-learning strategy; and in the Students Speaking focus group initiative (case 5) initiated by Prestigious University's e-learning director.

Yet, to be effective in informing strategic change, knowledge and understanding of the institution, its culture and its people must incorporate recognition of the diversity and heterogeneity that shape these, and that underpin institutional complexity. Such recognition includes what Knight and Trowler explain as 'getting to grips with the multiple realities of the main participants', which 'is crucial in implementing change, as is remembering that no one responds to realities other than their own'²⁷. A 'one size fits all' approach to championing change flies in the face of acceptance that people's responses to strategic change initiatives are shaped by these multiple realities, and that conflict and resistance are inevitable by-products of them; indeed, it has been argued that 'it is therefore not possible to arrive at an optimal goal or an optimal strategy; strategies must be compromises which allow the organisation to go forward'²⁸.

Universities – generally more so than the typical businesses or companies that define the contexts within which is located much of the management of change literature – have multiple layers of diversity and heterogeneity: at faculty level, at departmental level, at the subject, silo, or intra-departmental academic 'tribes and territories'²⁹ level – each of which represents a sub-culture that will potentially respond to change initiatives quite differently from the others. Moreover, administratively, most university faculties and departments enjoy considerable autonomy, which in some cases and under certain circumstances may place them out of the change agent's reach or jurisdiction. Getting them on board can therefore pose significant challenges, as occurred with faculty pro-dean, Freda's (case 2) leading the rolling out of an online module template across City Centre University:

26 Quinn J.M. (1993). Managing strategic change In C. Mabey & B. Mayon-White (eds). *Managing Change* (2nd revised edition). pp65–84 (p67).

27 Knight, P. & Trowler, P. (2001). *Departmental leadership in higher education*. Buckingham: Open University and the Society for Research into Higher Education (p25).

28 Johnson, G. (1993). Processes of managing strategic change. In C. Mabey & B. Mayon-White (eds) *Managing Change* (2nd revised edition). pp59–64 (p60).

29 Becher, T. & Trowler, P. (2001). *Academic tribes and territories: intellectual enquiry and the culture of disciplines*, Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.

"And now I've been charged with this idea of making it happen across all of the departments, which is actually incredibly difficult, because they each are their own, kind of, little universes and worlds, and to make something happen uniformly across these different kingdoms in some ways is quite tough, and I think that's been the problem. ... I think it could all fall apart if it doesn't have the support, say, of the deans and the departments, because they each have their own agenda."

(Freda, faculty pro-dean, City Centre University)

Faced with a situation that illustrates Knight and Trowler's observation that 'actors at the local level ... have their own situated rationality, which can lead them to amend or ignore aspects of centrally derived policy'³⁰, even the pro-vice-chancellor at City Centre University found his hands tied in trying to lead change across autonomous faculties whose deans were not answerable to him:

"I'd asked each faculty to come up with some kind of technology-enhanced learning working group within their own faculty And one dean said to me, 'No, I won't do it, and if you set up anything at university [level] I won't send anyone!' And there is no recourse that I have for that. Deans have their own devolved structures in the faculties, and they can run their faculties in the way that they please, so everything that I do as a pro-vice-chancellor has to be through persuasion. I have no line management at all. I have no line management for the pro-deans for learning and teaching, for example. And the deans can have a final voice, so that becomes a really big issue in trying to think about institutional initiatives and how to invent them."

(Pro-vice-chancellor, City Centre University)

Armed with the kind of local knowledge that has been labelled 'micro-political literacy'³¹ - which involves knowing who is who in an organisation and having sufficient familiarity with key personalities to be aware of who has influence, whose views hold sway, and who might, in turn, be cajoled into coming on board - resistance to change may be eroded by stealth. Such was Freda's strategy for winning powerful and influential allies who would support, and champion in their faculties, the online module template that she had been tasked with rolling out:

"What I've decided to do...you've got to...it's getting the right person; to have one or two individuals from each faculty. And they've got to be interested enough to be able to want to put the time and effort into this, and they've got to be senior enough and significant enough within their faculties in order to have enough clout with the deans to make it happen. And that's quite a tricky thing. And so, for instance, in the Faculty of X that's worked really well because there's a very interesting colleague who's also a deputy dean, and, yeah, if he's on board it will happen."

(Freda, faculty pro-dean, City Centre University)

To be most effective as a tool for leading change, knowing and understanding one's institution, its culture and its people must include awareness of the norms that prevail within specific organisational divisions, and a capacity to gauge the strength and nature of feelings within sub-cultures that challenge or resist strategic change initiatives. At Improved University (case 3) such resistance came from the university executive; at Premiership University (case 4) it came from a specific department - as members of the LTU explained:

"At the moment we're having a tussle with [X department], because there's a campaign from a couple of academics in [the subject]. ... They're talking about the expensive gadgetry that's in lecture theatres at the expense of having blackboards, and [this subject's] staff need blackboards. So we've got this, kind of, tussle. ... They set up a Facebook group and they've got a Twitter, and one of the tweets a couple of weeks ago was: Those morons in e-learning - look what they've done to this room! ... A number of people are contributing to this Facebook thing, and they're still saying things on that Facebook site about: this room sucks!"

(Alison, head of LTU, Premiership University)

"[X subject] is quite interesting because I've been here about six years, and I remember going to a departmental meeting there and really having a tough time. They were really against technology at the time. ... And I did my bit - well, usual stuff - but they were really quite aggressive."

(Donald, LTU, Premiership University)

30 Knight, P. & Trowler, P. (2001). Departmental leadership in higher education, Buckingham, Open University and the Society for Research into Higher Education (p4).

31 Kelchtermans, G. & Ballet, K. (2002). Micropolitical literacy: reconstructing a neglected dimension in teacher development. International Journal of Educational Research 37(8): 755-67.

Faced with resistance – particularly if it is aggressive - the effective leader of change can apply her/his local cultural knowledge to weigh up the situation and make a decision about which battles to fight to the death, and which to surrender to the opposition. S/he can also recognise when compromise may well offer the most gain, applying knowledge and understanding, not just of departmental or epistemic cultural norms, but also of the personalities that make up the resistant constituencies. At Premiership University the LTU identified the main protagonist in the battle for the blackboards and opted for appeasement and compromise, as Alison outlined: 'One of the [Learning Technology] team is with the guy from [X department] right now, doing a walk around of rooms, taking photographs and seeing if there are any quick wins that we can do'. With other, less aggressive, manifestations of resistance – such as from technophobes or techno-sceptics – a different kind of knowledge is called for: knowing how best to reel them in, which will come from understanding their concerns; as the e-learning director of a post-1992 university observed: 'I think very much, for the dinosaurs, you've got to go and see them face-to-face. You can't expect them to come to your service and look at online resources, so you have to have a starting point where it is face-to-face, supportive, nurturing, individual small group activity'.

Local cultural knowledge, then, is an invaluable tool in leading strategic change, but a key element of its effectiveness is its capacity to inform and enhance the vision upon which strategies are focused on realising.

Visionary leadership

It is generally accepted that effective leadership of strategic change requires a vision³². A realisable vision for developing TEL provision in an HEI incorporates both knowledge of the institution, its culture and its people, and a sound knowledge of TEL. In the CLL project cases that we analysed (cases 1-5), success appeared to correlate with leadership vision. In case 1 we present an analysis of a bottom-up change initiative led by a small group of colleagues who shared a vision for a module that would have specific features, in order to reach and meet the learning needs of a specific constituency of student. This was not principally a 'big' or expansive vision; it was small scale and modest. But it was entirely fit for purpose: it allowed the change leaders – the group - to set specific, achievable goals by focusing on a mental picture of an outcome that they were able to imagine and share with each other. Moreover, it was not a static vision, carved in stone; it evolved, reshaping itself in response to input on it from the CLL consultant. Most significantly, in its evolved form, it was realised. As a cog in the wheels of strategic change at City Centre University, this CLL project achieved very limited success initially, but as a discrete project it achieved much of what it was intended to achieve – not least in realising a vision for a specific teaching innovation that would enhance the student learning experience.

Case analysis 2, in contrast, relates a project without a clear vision. The deputy-vice-chancellor who was leading the initiative seemed, from all accounts, to have no fixed idea of the direction he wanted the project to take, and any ideas that he did have were liable to change – indeed, he had at one point allowed himself to change tack by following the consultant's suggestion to develop flexible learning approaches; then - possibly resulting from his limited knowledge and understanding of learning technologies and the TEL field - he later nailed his flag to the lecture capture mast. For the purposes of participating in a CLL project, this initial uncertainty and lack of direction were perfectly acceptable, since one of the purposes of the CLL initiative was to help and support HEIs, not least by giving them direction through encouraging their strategic thinking and to contribute knowledge and experience where they were lacking – indeed, we present above the example of a case of an institution whose strategic direction was deemed too developed to be able to be enhanced by CLL consultancy. But for the wider purpose of his leading institutional TEL-focused strategic change, this senior manager's underdeveloped vision significantly undermined his capacity. It is unsurprising, then, that the case 2 project was the least successful of the five CLL projects analysed. As a strategic change project it was heavily criticised and perceived as a failure by several City Centre University interviewees; asked to rate its success on a scale of one to 10 (where 10 denotes high success), one of them gave it five and another gave it one.

In contrast, leadership with vision is evident in the most successful of the projects that we analyse, as well as in those three post-1992 HEIs that, at the beginning of this section, we highlight as snapshots that convey impressively TEL-focused contexts. These are visions shot through with implications of the kinds of knowledge and understanding identified above as important facilitators of successful leadership. Asked to share their visions for developing TEL provision in their universities - despite Kotter's suggestion that effective transformational change leaders should be able to communicate their visions in five minutes or less and provoke a reaction that shows both interest and understanding³³ - many of those presenting themselves as our most visionary interviewees spent considerable time (in some cases up to 10 minutes) explaining the precise details of their plans and their developing strategies, sharing their ideals, their goals, and their priorities.

32 Kotter, P. (1995). Leading change: why transformation efforts fail. Harvard Business Review March–April 1995 59–67 (p63).

33 *ibid* (p63).

Whilst implying no criticism of the Improved University and the City Centre University interviewees – we fully appreciate that both their own knowledge of learning technologies and of the TEL field, and their respective universities' engagement in TEL, are still developing – we were nevertheless struck by a noticeable alignment between institutions' apparent TEL-related focus and achievements, and the quality of TEL-related vision expressed by members of their senior management and strategic change leadership teams, in terms of the level of specificity incorporated into the visions and the knowledge and ambition that they conveyed³⁴. We could not avoid noticing the expansiveness and specificity incorporated into those visions presented by representatives of HEIs whose TEL provision was ambitious and impressive, or - as in the case of Prestigious University's e-learning director – where TEL provision was being championed by a knowledgeable and informed, but frustrated, visionary.

The implications of these observations are clear: effective leadership of TEL-related strategic change must be focused on a well-formulated strategy that reflects an informed, ambitious, but realisable, vision. To merit all three of these adjectives, the vision must be grounded in sound knowledge and understanding of learning technologies and of the TEL field, and of the context in which the strategy is to be applied: the institution, its culture and its people.

In relation to the last of these - knowledge and understanding of the people – we supplement our analyses with a brief theoretical perspective, representing a different 'take' on leading and managing change: strategic change leadership as professional development.

Flipping the theory: leadership of change as professional development writ large

What is often overlooked is that change in the workplace impacts upon professionalism³⁵. Though it is seldom explicitly recognised, change initiatives represent attempts to change people's, or a workforce's, professionalism: to renovate it, replacing an old professionalism with a new professionalism. Another, related, point that is often overlooked is that changing professionalism constitutes professional development. When a government introduces reforms or other measures intended to foster or impose changes to the professionalism of a particular workforce it does so because it wants these practitioners to develop in ways that result in their practice's better matching its (the government's) ideologies and aspirations, in order to better meet its goals. This constitutes (intended) professional development at the macro level. Similarly, a university senior management's – or any other university change agent's – attempts to introduce new forms of practice to the academic workforce, such as the adoption of digital technologies into teaching practice, constitutes (intended) professional development at the meso (institutional) level. TEL-focused strategic change initiatives therefore represent (attempts at) professional development writ large. To better understand what influences the degree of success of such initiatives, we should therefore be looking not only at conventional management of change theories, but also at how professionalisms change and, by extension, how people develop professionally.

Leadership for professional development: an alternative perspective on initiating and leading change

Although the last few decades have seen the proliferation of the publication of useful models of professional development, none has elucidated fully the internalisation process that occurs in individuals in order to prompt them to adopt this or that new practice or process: the cognitive process that leads directly to individuals' professional development. This process has been referred to as micro-level development³⁶. Micro-level professional development – to illustrate the minuteness of its scale and the potential narrowness of its focus - is about an academic's discovering a better way of teaching the theory of relativity to a single struggling undergraduate, rather than her more expansive commitment to becoming an overall better physics lecturer.

A key processual component, or stage, of micro-level professional development is the individual's recognition of something as a 'better way' of 'doing' things (applying a broad interpretation of 'doing' to include mental as well as physical activity): better than what preceded, and than what is superseded by, the newly accepted and adopted professional practice (again, applying a similarly broad definition of practice to include mental activity) which, by definition, manifests professional development³⁷. Without this recognition there is no perceived rationale for change. To accept a new, or modified, professionalism, and to embrace it wholeheartedly, academics must see it as, on balance, a 'better' professionalism than the one that it replaces. This applies first and foremost not at the collective, whole institutional workforce, level, but at the level of the individual academic. So the academic who opposes the replacement of blackboards with digital technologies as teaching aids is resisting the imposition of

34 See the full research report for more detailed information on the content of these articulated visions, and the distinction between them.

35 The interpretation of professionalism that we apply is that presented in: Evans, L. (2015) Professionalism and professional development: what these research fields look like today – and what tomorrow should bring. Hillary Place Papers (2nd edition). <http://hpp.education.leeds.ac.uk/files/2013/11/HPP2015-2-Evans.pdf>

36 Evans, L. (2011).

37 Evans, L. (2014). Leadership for professional development and learning: enhancing our understanding of how teachers develop. *Cambridge Journal of Education* 44(2): 179–98.

a new academic professionalism for her subject area that the TEL-focused change agents are promoting. To her, this represents a worse, rather than a better, academic professionalism than the one that is characterised by, *inter alia*, teaching through chalk and talk. The teaching fellow who embraces lecture capture, on the other hand, and recognises the TEL change agenda as, for him, a 'better way', personifies professionalism-changing professional development in action.

Effective TEL-focused strategic change leadership in HEIs requires an understanding of what academics may – either immediately or over time – recognise and accept, on balance, as a 'better' academic professionalism. It involves appealing to their perceptions of a professionalism *that works for them*, and with which they can identify. In this respect, a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to work in a university setting, where epistemic tribes, territories and tribalistic rituals determine local, departmental cultures. Of course, the bigger picture is more complex and involves many more issues than this; initial local resistance and opposition may prove temporary, being gradually eroded.

Conceptual models of both professionalism and professional development recently developed by one of us trifurcate each into: behavioural, attitudinal and intellectual components³⁸. Whilst behavioural development may be imposed on people – exemplified in our research findings by many universities' having introduced mandatory baseline standards for academics' use of the VLE – attitudinal and intellectual development are impossible to impose; they are arrived at by the developpee's replacing an attitude, or a way of thinking or understanding or a knowledge structure, with what s/he perceives as a 'better' one. People cannot be ordered to develop in relation to these components – they must arrive at them freely, of their own accord. The skill in effective leadership of change involves convincing people that the new way is a *better way*.

Promoting TEL as a 'better way': the contribution of the CLL initiative

This leads us finally – and briefly, since it has featured throughout this report – to a summative consideration of the contribution to enhancing the student experience and improving student learning made by the CLL programme. Despite the fiasco that, from all accounts, was City Centre University's second CLL project (case 2), and the bemusement of Mick at Innovative University on learning that he was beyond CLL help, and the rather limited value that the CLL project was deemed to have added to Premiership University's TEL profile and progress, the programme was universally applauded by those of our research participants who were aware of it – particularly the CLL project institutional leads. Moreover, the programme's success is recognised beyond the community of its participants, with Trowler et al suggesting that Hefce 'could [usefully] focus on learning the lessons from successful interventions such as Changing the Learning Landscape'³⁹.

The perceived key benefits of participation in the CLL projects have been touched upon in our analyses above: it ensured that the institutional teams remained focused on and disciplined themselves to progress the requisite tasks, rather than lapse into procrastination; it sustained the motivation of, and revitalised, the institutional teams; it fostered a sense of achievement; it offered practical support and expertise that was often lacking or in short supply in-house; it brought objectivity and externality – in the person of the consultant – that broadened perspectives and challenged the status quo; and it provided leverage – again, in the person of the consultant who was recognised as an expert in the field – for institutional teams to push through their change agendas in the face of resistance.

More specifically – and to 'zoom in' on just a few selected cases of CLL-participating HEIs that featured in our research – the legacy of the CLL initiative includes: a commitment at City Centre University to roll out flexible learning across the institution; the ongoing development of an e-learning strategy at Improved University – including the establishment of an active TEL working group; enhancements to Prestigious University's distance learning delivery – and a widened perspective on what constitutes distance learning. In particular, the CLL programme added most value to those HEIs that were lagging behind and have the most distance to make up. So the greatest gains have been at institutions such as Improved University, and City Centre University, and – for the leverage it lent to the e-learning experts there – at Prestigious University.

The CLL initiative was a professional development initiative. What it has done – its greatest legacy – is to put TEL on the agendas of HEIs that had not really, or seriously, confronted the digital revolution. In those institutions it has kickstarted the dialogue that is a precursor to institutional cultural evolution. Like all effective professional development initiatives, it has signalled to those HEIs what they have all come to accept as a 'better way', and supported them in taking that way.

38 Ibid.

39 Trowler, P., Ashwin, P. & Saunders, M. (2014). The role of HEFCE in teaching and learning enhancement: a review of evaluative evidence. York: Higher Education Academy (p27).

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Appendices

Appendix 1: case analysis 1

Voices crying in the wilderness? The frustrations of leading bottom-up change

This CLL project supported a small group of colleagues - a faculty pro-dean, five other academics (two of them designated departmental e-learning champions), and a learning technologist - from pre-1992 City Centre University. They were allocated CLL consultant Graham, a blended learning specialist, to support their ambition to develop a generic model in the form of a module template for online learning, which they hoped and anticipated other colleagues across the university would then use to design online learning modules.

With the full knowledge of the university's pro-vice-chancellor for learning and teaching (who had encouraged and supported the application for CLL support), the group's co-ordinated move towards online learning represented something of a first for their university, whose official line had been that its teaching provision is predominantly face-to-face. The CLL consultant stretched the group's conceptualisation of blended learning, encouraging them to go beyond conventional models, and to consider radically innovative approaches. For the most part, the City Centre University colleagues were receptive to such thinking outside the box, and recognised the consultant's contribution to their development as educators. As learning technologist, Barbara, recollected, 'he pushed us to answer a lot of questions that we wouldn't necessarily have asked ourselves. So I think that was really valuable', and faculty pro-dean, Freda, observed:

"What we did with our consultant was just, actually, spend a lot of time originally thinking through what blended learning means, and what models one can use, and what factors one needs to take into account. And that's what he really, really helped with - just ... knowing the problems and the pitfalls, knowing the things we needed to ... take into account."

The result of several months' meetings and working together was an online module in psychology, which CLL consultant Graham described as 'completely revolutionary for the institution - and completely revolutionary for the sector'. Learning technologist Barbara emphasised the project's innovative focus: 'It wasn't just converting a module ... it was completely, kind of, a brand new entity'.

All participants adjudged the project a resounding success; 'I just loved it!', remarked Graham, who summarised its outcome:

*"In terms of the success, from the [CLL] proposal - what the bid was all about - what it was we were trying to achieve, that was a big tick, really. And they [the group] were **astonished** - genuinely astonished. I had completely knocked them for six about what could be thought about... what else could be done. And that was very fulfilling... very enjoyable."*

The City Centre University colleagues generally reported working well with Graham, and acknowledged the clear benefits brought not only by his expertise and experience, but also by the discipline and focus necessitated by working to what was from all accounts a tight schedule, with tasks that had to be completed before each consultancy meeting:

*"It meant that we **had** to have meetings, we **had** to prepare in between the meetings for the next one. And they had to happen quite quickly because the timescale for the consultancy was quite short."*

(Barbara, learning technologist)

*"What [the consultant] helped us with was invaluable, and it just wouldn't have happened - there's no way... I mean, both in the sense of his expertise, but also just providing that framework and a space to talk through these things. Without that being put in, we'd have **never** have got together; ... we'd have never sustained it. It got us focussed, and it became very enjoyable."*

(Freda, faculty pro-dean for student education)

The project outcome was that an online learning module template was indeed designed and developed, and, to demonstrate its capacity and potential, was then used by the group as the basis for an online module in psychology that was put onto the books, went live, and successfully recruited students. The group were understandably proud of their pioneering achievement, not least because they had driven it, delivered it, and, as a result, felt ownership of it.

Voices crying in the wilderness? The downside of bottom-up initiatives

Yet the bottom-up nature of the initiative was to prove problematic, for the project reportedly failed to scale the heights that some group members had hoped it might reach, insofar as it evidently remained relatively unnoticed beyond the CLL project group and their close colleagues:

"Interestingly, [the online learning project] initially didn't get that much interest ... It didn't have a big impact across the university. ... And I was invited to several [institution-wide meetings to discuss digital learning] - as were the two e-learning champions. And ... every time we came, we'd mention the project; I mean, I'm sure we bored everybody senseless! But we kept mentioning it, and we kept mentioning it, because it just seemed such an obvious example of something that we'd done which seemed to feed into the discussions."

(Freda, faculty pro-dean for student education)

Anne, lecturer: "We had hoped that once this [online module template] was developed there would be more interest from other parts of the university ... we hoped that ... management would just take on board that model and perhaps do that for other departments."

Interviewer: "Now, you say management haven't taken it on board; have you tried - I mean, is this a disappointment to you?"

Anne, lecturer: "It is a disappointment, yes."

Interviewer: "Have you made the effort to get them involved?"

Anne, lecturer: "Yes. ... We've talked about having a presentation somewhere, about this, so people could really understand it ... But it, kind of, never happens, and it ends up being forgotten."

The consultant, too, perceived a sense of deflation within the group, as they began to realise that the impact of their achievement across the university was negligible:

"And the module was finished, and they went live with it as a pilot, and they were able to introduce it across other parts of the university. I think they were disappointed that it wasn't more... applauded... more... taken up. ... I was surprised - and disappointed - that it didn't have more of an immediate impact. ... It was a lovely module, and it could've had ripples throughout the institution."

(Graham, CLL consultant)

Why was it that the design of an apparently successful and innovative online module, with the potential to serve as a template for the rolling out of more blended learning across the university, failed to be taken up?

What lessons can be learned from this thwarted bottom-up attempt to take forward TEL in the institution?

The reason why: reflection and introspection

It seems that two factors combined to impede the continued development of this project's outcome. Broadly, these may be categorised as: a naively unambitious impact and dissemination plan, and senior management's taking its eye off the (CLL) ball.

The first was mainly a bottom-up factor: an error - or misjudgement - on the part of the project team. Prompted in her research interview to reflect on why the project had attracted very limited attention across the university, faculty pro-dean, Freda commented: 'I think we *could've* done more'. Her 'mistake', she suggested, had been to roll out the template within her own faculty, where she felt confident of its being taken up - pursuing its speedy implementation on a relatively modest scale, within a familiar environment. She had - to use her own words - taken 'the path of least resistance', in order to achieve a quick return on the group's achievement, rather than face the daunting prospect of seeking institutional recognition, endorsement, and adoption, with all the associated problems that stem from micro-political complexities, competing priorities, and administrative hurdles.

Asked if the group had taken their achievement back to the pro-vice-chancellor who had initially brought them together, and had given the nod to their CLL application, Freda responded:

*"I'm not sure that we really did, at that stage. ... I think, had we seen it more as **university** work ... rather than taking it into the faculty - and done that via [the pro-vice-chancellor] - yes, I think it might have had more of an immediate impact."*

The second factor seems to have been the pro-vice-chancellor's failure, in turn, to keep abreast of the CLL project's progress, and to champion its output across the wider university and with senior management team. With such 'clout' behind her, Freda might have been more inclined towards ambitious, rather than safe and un confrontational, dissemination. In endorsing the original CLL application, the pro-vice-chancellor had metaphorically thrown into the air one more of the many balls that such a senior post holder must constantly try to juggle. Unfortunately, he seems then to have taken his eye off this particular one and failed to spot where and when it landed.

The final judgment?

Our analysis implies no criticism of either party – we fully appreciate how much time and effort (to say nothing of micro-political acumen) would have been required for the project group to push on, and upwards and outwards, with their newly created online module, convincing others (including many sceptics) of its potential. We also recognise the unwieldy, and extremely challenging, nature of senior leadership and management roles, and the expansive array of tasks and responsibilities that are part and parcel of them. This is nevertheless a tale of wasted opportunities, thwarted ambition, and unfulfilled potential. But it has a very interesting sequel, for six months after the completion of this 2013 CLL project, City Centre University embarked upon a second one, which was eventually to breathe new life into the online learning module template developed in the first project, affording it new importance. This second project is the subject of case 2, presented below.

Appendix 2: case analysis 2

Dancing to different tunes? Disjointed efforts at developing a flexible learning strategy

In contrast to City Centre University's first, bottom-up project, its second CLL project was a top-down one, driven by senior management and instigated by the pro-vice-chancellor for learning and teaching.

The impetus for it appears to have come from a recently launched institutional agenda – or, in the words of the pro-vice-chancellor for learning and teaching, 'a strategic imperative' - reflecting the vice-chancellor's awareness of the need to embrace digital learning. In contrast to the rather narrow focus of project one, the second project sought more general strategic advice and guidance on how the university might extend its flexible blended learning provision, and on the advantages and disadvantages of a range of technologies and learning models that senior management could consider and evaluate against the institution's needs and priorities. Comparing it with the bottom-up initiative described in Case Analysis 1, faculty pro-dean Freda described it as 'a much more university-led piece of work on changing the kind of learning landscape around digital learning within City Centre University'.

The consultancy: group dynamics and approaches to working

Graham, the CLL consultant who had supported its first project, was reassigned to City Centre University to support project two but, by all accounts, the consultancy did not proceed smoothly – particularly the working relationship between Graham and the institutional CLL project team, which comprised mainly senior academics and administrators, led by the deputy-vice-chancellor.

Graham identified two difficulties: first, it appeared that the pro-vice-chancellor for learning and teaching, who had submitted the proposal for CLL support, was being outranked by the deputy-vice-chancellor who was taking charge of the project and following a different agenda from the one originally proposed; in Graham's words: 'I had a feeling that the whole project had got hijacked, from the PVC's perspective. ... I was getting one message from the DVC and another message from the PVC. ... In the end the PVC gave way'. (Other interviewees made similar observations.) The second problem that Graham spoke of was the time lag between the project start and the preceding CLL strategic conversation that had occurred six months earlier - in which Graham had had no involvement; it had been led by a different consultant. Both he and the pro-vice-chancellor agreed that, between those two events, the university had reconsidered its original proposal and changed direction:

“From the time of the original application to the time we started working with [the consultant] the strategic imperative had developed further. The university’s thinking and needs had moved on somewhat since the original application and strategic conversation.”

(Pro-vice-chancellor for teaching and learning)

Not only these two problems but also, more fundamentally, the incongruence between Graham’s ideas and perspectives and those of the university’s senior project team to whom he was answerable, appear to have jeopardised the project. Indeed, struggling to envisage a mutually satisfactory outcome, Graham referred to it as his ‘crisis’. Essentially, he had expected – and wanted – to support a discrete developmental project (as had occurred with City Centre University’s first CLL project), but the deputy-vice-chancellor seemed to want a more traditional form of consultancy, involving Graham’s carrying out fieldwork to assess the institution’s needs, and, in a formal report, to make recommendations for strategic change. Graham was also keen to build upon the achievements of project one, which he saw both as showcasing the skills and expertise that were available in-house, and as the potential foundation for the university’s change agenda.

By way of a compromise, Graham proposed a way forward that involved reconvening the first project group – the institution’s resident TEL experts – to work with him in drafting the kind of report that the deputy-vice-chancellor seemed to want.

All’s well that ends well? Breaking the deadlock and recognising achievement

In line with Graham’s proposal, regular meetings were convened of what came to be known, unofficially, as the blended learning working group: the CLL project one team, augmented by a succession of interested colleagues from across the university, co-opted as critical friends and opinion-contributors who, to encourage participation, were each invited to just one meeting. According to Graham, many of these supplementary members chose to participate repeatedly: ‘the group grew and grew because everybody loved taking part in them [the meetings]’. Yet many of the core group interviewees expressed frustration at having to start every meeting briefing newcomers:

“The whole purpose of the meeting had to be re-explained from scratch every single time, and that took up an enormous quantity of the available time. That was highly frustrating.”

(Barbara, learning technologist)

Intended to satisfy the deputy-vice-chancellor’s wish that Graham, in order to inform the strategic change recommendations that he would include in his report, should consult with representatives of different constituencies of City Centre University staff, the blended learning working group was focused on addressing how the institution might best take forward the vice-chancellor’s TEL strategic imperative. Within this agenda, prominence was given to the online learning module template that had resulted from project one as, along with the psychology module that had been developed to illustrate its capacity, it was presented as an example of what could be achieved.

It was at this point, through the showcasing of their achievements, that the first project group began to receive recognition, and their work started to attract attention on a wider scale than had hitherto occurred. The template and module were proposed by Graham not only as an example of the kind of development that could be achieved university-wide, but also as a starting point, a model that could be enhanced and extended. Acknowledging that there had been a problematic period when consensus had been elusive - ‘We did flounder in the middle’ - Graham credited the most senior group member, pro-dean Freda, with having led them all to a compromise, which involved presenting a range of models of flexible learning, outlining what each might look like - a ‘menu’.

Epilogue

Perhaps because, of all the members of the working group, she was the most senior, it was Freda, again, who was to play a pivotal role in keeping alive the vision and the capacity and potential represented by the project one online learning module template. After Graham had presented his report, as an effort to address the university’s TEL strategic imperative, Freda was tasked by the pro-vice-chancellor for learning and teaching to roll out the template institution-wide. It is, from all accounts, early days, but it seems that the achievements of a determined, committed and enthusiastic group of pioneering colleagues are likely to have a much bigger impact within their institution than any of them had initially hoped for. The last word in this ‘tale of two projects’ must come from Freda herself, who succinctly sums up the whole story and its outcome to date:

“That was the moment where, suddenly, the fact that we’d done this piece of work was seen, and became more seen! And I’ve now been charged with rolling this out across the university, so that there’s a version of the module in all the departments! So in some senses, [it] took on a life of its own and became bigger than we originally thought it was going to, and has had quite a lot of, I think, impact across the university in various ways.”

Appendix 3: case analysis 3

Getting engaged: developing a sustainable TEL strategy

Background: project focus and impetus

At first glance case 3 appears an unremarkable story – an uncomplicated, straightforward account of a group of colleagues who applied for help under the aegis of the CLL initiative and received much of what they had wished for. We chose it as a case for analysis because, whilst in several respects it runs parallel to case analysis 2, it also deviates from it in illustrating what is achievable under the ‘right’ circumstances and conditions – and what could have been achieved by City Centre’s CLL projects if those circumstances and conditions had been present, and had prevailed.

This story takes place in what we shall call Improved University: a small post-1992 institution located in the south of England that, having grown from being a college of education, has expanded steadily over the last two decades. A teaching-focused, rather than a research-focused, institution, it boasts some pockets of research activity and entered a small proportion of its academics in REF2014.

The key players in the CLL project were Danny, the director of the university’s Centre for Academic Practice (CAP), and his line manager, Jim, the director of education quality. Conscious that Improved University was lagging behind the rest of the sector in adopting TEL, and that in-house expertise was in short supply, these colleagues simply wanted support and advice in taking forward an institutional digital learning strategy.

Developing a plan for strategic change

The CLL project at Improved University began on the day the HEA-appointed consultant arrived on campus to engage in the strategic conversation with the steering group and then with a succession of groups: the departmental e-learning champions, the university executive, the heads of department, and the faculty pro-deans for student education. The first to be met, however, was the student group, because the issues that they raised were expected to set the agenda for discussion with the other constituencies. From all accounts the day was a great success, with the conversations with students proving the most enlightening of all the discussions:

“The students ... if you like, they held up a mirror to us and said, ‘This is what it’s like to be a student.’ ... They spoke very clearly and went straight to the issues, and gave a very colourful and clear illustration of what it was like to be a student on these courses. ... And that went really, really well – we probably found that the most useful.”

(Danny, director of CAP)

The other constituency groups, too, offered useful perspectives:

“The meeting with the e-learning champions... I remember one of them saying, quite passionately, ‘We keep talking about this and nothing seems to move forward!’ ... So, it brought to the surface lots of things.”

(Jim, education quality director)

But in the case of the university executive group, their attitude towards the prospect of embarking upon a TEL-focused strategic change initiative alerted the CLL steering group to the institutional challenges it might have to face; as Danny related, this was ‘the hardest nut to crack’:

“If the student group was the best in terms of the free-flowing nature of the conversation, and the clear identification of issues, then, there was a defensiveness and a resistance from the [executive] – and, from my point of view, I was chairing all of these conversations – it was the most difficult to... to move it on.”

(Danny, director of CAP)

*"The discussion with the students was brilliant, but, with the executive ... not many came, and their response wasn't terribly positive. ... Certainly, one of the deans of faculty felt that it wasn't really necessary to have these...charismatic, engaging lecturers that could hold an audience [engage in TEL] – and **that** was what he felt was good learning and teaching, not online [teaching]."*

(Rosie, head of the institutional learning technology support service and member of the CLL steering group)

(We sought interviews with members of the university's executive group, without making any reference to their reported negativity. One declined our invitation; none of the others responded.)

The consultant's report – based on the information gleaned during the strategic conversation day - had emphasised the value of implementing 'quick wins': small initiatives and changes that could be introduced speedily and relatively easily in order to convey that the change agenda was being addressed without delay; as Danny explained: 'If it *is* going to be seen and adopted by the university community as a priority, they needed to see the effect of this happening quickly'. (He gave, as an example of a 'quick win', the introduction of an online tutorial booking facility for students – adding, with evident frustration: 'It *still* hasn't happened in every case!'). The report had also recommended that the university focus on curriculum design – specifically, not simply *discussing* TEL, but taking the next step of replacing some of the face-to-face course delivery with blended learning models.

Driving forward: the push for strategic change

Jim realised that if the push for TEL-focused strategic change at Improved University did not come from him, it would probably come from no one. By this time the deputy-vice-chancellor had left the university and not yet been replaced, and, though he was recognised as being student-focused, and supportive of an institutional TEL agenda, the vice-chancellor himself, Jim acknowledged, had other priorities: 'How can I put it? Er ... the vice-chancellor's quite strong in this institution, in terms of prioritising and identifying things. ... I don't think he has seen this as particularly a priority'. Jim was aware that, as a member of the university's senior management team, he (Jim) had (albeit to a limited extent) the 'clout' - that very committed, but less influential, colleagues at middle management level lacked to rally the troops and lead them on a TEL strategic campaign.

Whilst it soon became apparent that a TEL strategy was needed, it was less clear who would write it:

"I didn't know who was going to write the strategy, because at that point I didn't feel capable of doing so. And I remember, I said to Danny and Rosie – because I didn't think even between the three of us, we were capable of doing so – I said, 'Should we actually get in a consultant to do it?' ... And then, I don't know why, but after another meeting or two – I thought: no, I think I could have a stab at writing something which is short. ... I sent it to that small group; one of them came back with some really helpful comments – all of which I've taken on board. ... So, that's the point at which we are now."

(Jim, education quality director)

Meanwhile, Danny continued to lead on engaging with the CLL consultant and, following up on her report, organised two curriculum design days that she facilitated and that were evaluated very positively. A fourth consultancy day was directed at trying to win over the sceptics.

The path to strategic change: value added consultancy?

Asked to consider how useful their participation in the CLL initiative has been, and how helpful the consultants were, the Improved University CLL team all identified positive elements or outcomes of their participation – the greatest of which was the exposure it gave to the TEL agenda within the institution:

"I think it's been a really positive experience for the university, taking part in the CLL – and certainly, from my perspective, I feel like TEL's much higher up the agenda than before we did it."

(Rosie, learning technologist)

"I think, probably, without it, we would've relied on [our] e-learning champions, so to speak. We would probably have identified some staff development sessions and relied on departmental directors of learning and teaching to try and drum up some support in terms of attendance at these sessions. So, I don't think we would've succeeded in...in getting an institutional drive, and linking it to other areas ... I think it's becoming part of the recruitment strategy of the university's specifically requiring – probably under the 'desirable' heading - of what we're looking for in a teacher. ... Now we have faculties who are planning away days for their staff, and making technology-enhanced learning their focus."

(Danny, director of CAP)

"The positive aspect of it was, it got it on the agenda, made us give it some priority. We've used the term - which I like: changing the learning landscape - and the reference to the initiative as a rationale for driving some things. But I think we've got to the point now, whereby that's legacy...history, now; it's up to us now to identify how we're going to take various things forward."

(Jim, education quality director)

In common with CLL projects at other institutions, at Improved University the consultant injected into the strategic change initiatives an externality that, for the most part, gave them credibility and encouraged senior managers to take notice of them. Despite resistance from the executive group, this feature of the consultancy worked to the advantage of the TEL pioneers at Improved University:

"I think it's that objectivity, of having someone from outside of the university who is an expert in the field, that has that recognition – knowing what they're talking about, basically – and coming in and actually saying, "Yes, what you're trying to do from within is a good thing to be doing, and...we support this""

(Rosie, learning technologist)

Life after CLL: achievements and legacy

Unlike case 1, this story is not one that traces the development of one specific identifiable project that could then be showcased and, in due course, applauded as a pedagogical innovation and success story. Rather, it is a tale of how a determined senior manager, supported by two equally determined support service heads (Danny and Rosie), drew upon external advice and support to devise and implement a succession of relatively small TEL-related initiatives that would be augmented over the coming months and years.

Since participating in the CLL initiative, the Improved University CLL team have continued steadily along the path that the consultant led them to. The original CLL steering group has been augmented into a TEL working group, which includes the university's departmental learning and teaching champions. A tangible output from the group has been – as an effort to promote consistency across faculties and courses - the introduction of a set of baseline standards for use in the virtual learning environment (VLE):

*"Some people used [the VLE]; some people **didn't** use it...or some people used it as a repository; some people used other tools. And, within that, something that was about, kind of, using it in a way that made sense to students – and in a consistent way. So, we have recently approved what we've called **baseline standards** for use with the VLE - quite short and simple; they are minimum standards, but they are intended to say, 'Look, every module, as a minimum, should do...this list of things'"*

(Jim, education quality director)

Epilogue

For Improved University, the value of the CLL initiative was that it sharpened their focus on TEL, pointed them in the direction that was (at that stage in their development) the best one for them to take, supported their enthusiasm with sound advice on how to tackle specific issues, and, above all, galvanised them into action that seems to have been sustained, post-CLL. This case is distinct from those of City Centre University (cases 1 and 2) in being led by a very proactive member of the senior management team who recognised the need for – and the value in – recruiting staff (academics and academic-related) with the requisite expertise and tapping into their skills, enthusiasm and commitment to take their university into the 21st century in relation to engagement with new learning technologies. More significantly, student engagement was – and remains - a key feature of this university's strategic change initiative, ensuring that the direction taken was one that led towards real enhancement of the student experience, as

defined by students themselves. At Improved University, as Danny remarked: 'I think there's a whole range of challenges and issues facing us ... but, as far as TEL is concerned, I think we're *getting* there.'

Appendix 4: case analysis 4

A winning team? Championing TEL-focused cultural change

Background: project focus and impetus

Premiership University is a very successful pre-1992 institution. It is, by the standards of the sector, well-resourced and a field-leader in many respects; it attracts high calibre, international academics and research fellows, has several world-leading departments, and enjoys a vibrant, income-generating, research culture that was recognised in REF2014. Its TEL facilities are commensurate with such a profile; it was a relatively early adopter of learning technologies, and has a large workforce attached to an extensive range of professional support services directed at taking the TEL – and the wider teaching and learning - agenda forward.

The institution's CLL project application had been led by Alison, the director of one such service: the Learning Technology Unit (LTU). The resultant project, whilst overseen by Alison, was led on a day-to-day level by one of her direct reports, Donald: the leader of a specialist team within the LTU. With an institutional e-learning strategy in place - which Alison had played a major role in writing, actively supported and assisted by the pro-vice-chancellor for education - it was therefore decided to apply for support for a CLL project that would provide consultancy advice on building up an effective cadre of departmental TEL champions, who would promote e-learning and support local capacity building by acting as advisors to departmental colleagues:

"We wanted to build up this kind of capacity within the institution where it has a sufficient number of people, a strategic number of people - a tipping point number of people, if you like - who are interested enough and, kind of, au fait enough in e-learning to make that change happen locally, so they would then act with us, essentially, to try and make the strategy happen."

(Donald, leader, LTU team)

Specifically, these two colleagues wanted CLL consultancy advice on deciding: how such champions could be recruited; how best to launch the champions network; what kinds of activities and projects it would be reasonable to expect champions to be engaged in; and how the LTU could best support them.

Team TEL champions: the project

There is little of substance to report on Premiership University's project: Team TEL Champions. From all accounts it proceeded well and without any hitches; the CLL consultant described it as a 'good and well-conceived project', adding that 'the Premiership University team were excellent'. It was apparently smooth, slick and straightforward in its execution, resulting in the recruitment of an extensive TEL champions network of, initially, over a hundred individuals (a figure that has increased by 50% since the network's launch). With the recruitment process having been started before her arrival, the consultant's input included advice for the LTU on, *inter alia*: the content of a questionnaire directed at capturing the interests of TEL champions; recruitment strategies - especially on the need to attract a good mix of champions including those with administrative and teaching experience; the sorts of 'carrots' that could sustain the network; keeping in close touch with champions; the sorts of activities that champions could engage in; and how best to interact and engage with departments in order better to support the champions.

Asked in their interviews to evaluate the project, and the CLL consultancy specifically, Alison and Duncan both agreed that its main value had been in encouraging them to prioritise and remain focused on champions-related work in order to be adequately prepared for consultancy meetings. They also found the consultant's external validation of their work and achievements gratifying and motivating:

"I'm not sure that the consultancy has given us any particular insights, but, it's more...they make you do the event and plan it, and, y'know, sometimes we might be inclined to say, 'Oh, I haven't got time to do it at the moment', but, by having that commitment, you do it."

(Alison, director, LTU)

In the wake, then, of an apparently successful - but uneventful - project execution, our attention in this case analysis shifted from the CLL project itself to its outcomes and impact; our interest was in following up the progress of Premiership University's wider

TEL-focused strategic change initiative, *post*-CLL project. Reflecting the nature of Team TEL Champions, our focus was wide, for, as an integral part of the institution's e-learning strategy, the establishment of a TEL champions network was never intended to be an end in itself; it was directed at creating and sustaining a collegial agency that would promote, enhance and strengthen TEL provision and widen TEL engagement – 'to spearhead change at departmental and faculty level', as Donald explained it - encouraging the development of an institutional culture of digital teaching and learning.

It was evidence of such a culture that we sought, and present below.

Championing a TEL-focused culture: the change agents' perspective

Alison's and Donald's evaluations of the TEL champions network and, more broadly, progress in delivering the e-learning strategy, were largely positive – asked to give an arbitrary mark out of 10 for the progress achieved, Alison suggested seven, on the basis that: 'we've got pockets of zero progress, or minimal progress, and we've got pockets of excellent progress', and Donald felt that eight was a fair assessment: 'because I think the things that we've done well are really crucial and needed to be done, whereas the other ones ... are slightly less important'.

In relation to the TEL champions network, in nearly every department, Alison and Donald both reported, they had succeeded in realising their vision of what Alison called 'our dual-pronged champions approach', which involved having two TEL champions: an academic and an administrator. At the time of our interviewing her – almost two years after the launch of the TEL champions network initiative - she implied that, having initially encountered a small pocket of resistance in a few departments to the idea of nominating champions ('I had a couple of exchanges with heads of department, [who were] saying, "You must be kidding!", y'know, "We're way too busy; we can't possibly do this"') she now believed that every department in the institution had at least one champion.

But we were keen to explore to what extent both the picture presented by Alison and Donald of the university's progress in operationalising its e-learning strategy, and Donald's perception of a slowly evolving TEL-focused culture, were shared – particularly by the TEL champions themselves, and by others who, in various ways and through their various roles, are often at the frontline of TEL delivery in Premiership University. In their interviews Donald and Alison had 'talked up' the work and achievements of their unit, and their enthusiasm and motivation were contagious, but we felt it was important to give voice to others who might have an experientially informed perspective on the TEL strategic change initiative at Premiership University.

The ripple effects of team TEL champions: wider perspectives on premiership university's TEL-focused culture

Asked for his perspective on TEL provision within the university generally, the student union sabbatical officer (for education) highlighted variability as a key issue:

Interviewer: *"What about TEL provision at Premiership University? Is the university really at the top of the tree?"*

Student union sabbatical officer: *"Not quite. The reason I say that is because it's really varied. Premiership University really has the whole spectrum of advanced through to primitive forms of technology. ... Some departments are really good at it – they do the flipped lecture, they have the entirely online module, and they would use the allocated lecture time as their tutorials, so students can focus on particularly difficult issues. But in other departments it's as if it's still the 20th century, with just pure, traditional lectures, and even submission is paper-based and not online...and no anonymous marking or anything like that. So, it's quite varied; we get, like, the whole spectrum."*

In something of a slight contrast to the rather rosy picture sketched out by Donald and Alison of academics' engagement in lecture capture⁴⁰, the student union officer was disappointed by what he considered inadequate take-up:

"Most departments currently don't make use of lecture cast. The facilities are there, but some lecturers feel, like: 'Oh, if I put this up, students will stop coming to the lecture.' I've read quite convincing evidence that that's not the case."

More generally, a lecturer whom we singled out for interview because Alison had identified her as one of the most TEL-focused academics in her department – a department that had apparently achieved a certain amount of notoriety with the LTU on account

40 See the more expansive case analysis 4 in the full report, accessible at: www.lfhe.ac.uk/Evans5.5

of its resistance to TEL, and some of its members' expressed preferences for retaining blackboards – was similarly cautious in her evaluation of TEL activity at Premiership University:

*“So, there’s clearly a big push, but it’s not trickling down all the way. ... And certainly in the department we’re doing little bits and bobs around the **edges** of technology-enhanced learning, but it’s definitely being resisted in some places. And nobody’s doing anything huge. I mean, I - if I’m doing the most, I’m not doing lots.”*

She then described the nature of her own activity, which clearly exceeded the minimum, baseline, online information provision:

“I do use the VLE reasonably heavily, but in a very, kind of, traditional, this-is-where-I’ve-put-my-webpage-now, kind of way. So, after each lecture – or, rather, after each week of lectures - I will put up the lecture notes, so the students can go and get them. And then, the other thing that I’ve done - and I started it last year - is that I produced some videos of the lectures, which are also available within the VLE. I booked a lecture room and I spent an afternoon last year doing the complicated bits of one week’s theory, and captured those, and then edited them into little segments of individual topics.”

In relation to the university’s TEL champions – who had been portrayed by Alison and Donald as jewels in the learning technology support service’s crown – the student union sabbatical officer claimed to know little, if anything, about them, commenting, ‘I’m not sure what they’re actually championing’. The lecturer quoted above was familiar with the TEL champion role, but was cynical about the impact that the champion was likely to have in her department, populated, as she portrayed it, with TEL sceptics and rebels, speaking of her colleague who was the TEL champion:

“[Being the TEL champion] has not got any particular traction with the rest of the department, and, to be honest, if he’d turned into a proper TEL champion who was actually pushing the stuff, it would have harmed his reputation in the department!”

Whilst we were unable to interview either the outgoing or incoming TEL champion in this department, we did include among our interviewees two TEL champions from other departments.

Championing a TEL-focused culture: the champions’ perspective

We were particularly interested to learn how the champions approached their roles; what they considered their key responsibilities, and how effective they felt their engagement or interventions with colleagues to be. We also wanted to know something of the scale and nature of their own TEL practice.

TEL champion Brian, located in one of the science departments, described himself: ‘I suppose I was, kind of, one of the early adopters of e-learning tools, and e-learning philosophy, as well - if there is such a thing’. He described his approach to the TEL champion role as involving two main, inter-related, elements: keeping abreast of the TEL field, and acting as a filter of information to his colleagues:

“I, kind of, look out for things...make enough intellectual space for browsing. So it’s, kind of, something that I keep doing; so I won’t just delete the email, I’ll have a good look at it and assess its content for wider relevance - if it’s something from a tech provider or a conference, I don’t commit to go to those conferences on e-learning, but will have probably scanned the agenda. And I can admit I have it in my mind to mention certain things, to make myself available...make people in the department aware that, if there’s some mysterious thing on the VLE that they can’t sort out, y’know, just give me a look at it and I’ll sort them out. And it seems to work.”

Asked if he considered his role as including trying to convert sceptics, he responded: ‘Not to convert, but just to, hopefully, make them aware that there’s good news to be had. I think...*ambassador* might be a better word for it’. Brian outlined the nature of his own typical TEL practice: ‘I do a little bit of lecture recording, but it’s mainly for back-up purposes rather than to flip it forward. But we do a little bit of...I think it’s called *micro-scale flipping*; I don’t know if anybody’s really jumped on the flipping bronco so far. I think there’s a bit of fear about that’. He claimed to use the VLE ‘to the full’: which, he indicated, includes using it as a vehicle to disseminate material, to administer pop quizzes, to gather assessments, to serve as a repository for the digital artefacts that cannot be shown in the lecture theatre: ‘I do like to use a good variety of tools on the VLE - but I don’t think I’ve failed if I haven’t used all 27 of them!’

Located in an arts and humanities department, another interviewee, Robert, explained that he had become a TEL champion 'almost by default' since his is a very small department and he was really the only person who could feasibly have taken on the role, despite also being head of department. He was very supportive of the TEL champions initiative, whilst bemoaning that, with so many other demands on his time, he finds it difficult to be as engaged in the network as he would like:

"I think it is a useful idea. I feel a little bit guilty - and maybe even a bit sad - that I'm not as involved as I was, but you will understand that, as a head of department now, I have umpteen obligations ... I personally don't have the time, so, I think it's a good idea, but you need to find people in each department who are really, really into it."

But despite his concern that he may be neglecting somewhat his TEL champions' role, Robert's personal commitment to and engagement with TEL – as he describes them – seem to far exceed what may be considered Premiership University's norm – certainly as the female lecturer, quoted above, described the norm within her department. Contrary to Brian's observation, here was someone who had most definitely 'jumped on the flipping bronco'.

He spoke of his interest in lecture flipping:

"That really was my interest, and that was partly, sort of, born of necessity because I thought: well, I've got this big new cohort coming in - 80 students; I just think the old lecture series model looks really tired and strained a lot of the time. Now, how am I going to do this? And, above all ... I really wanted to build a community of learners, all sharing in this very exciting new, complex, difficult, project. And the best way, I thought, would be to have us all together - it was then 80 students, now it's 120 - in the room, talking about stuff; y'know; really lively plenaries. And so I, sort of, introduced this flipping lectures as a way to do that: to build a learning community where we're talking about all sorts of big ideas."

With such a developing profile, Robert was an obvious candidate for the TEL champions network:

"So I was really good at flipping the lectures that I was thought of as someone using technology in an interesting way, and that's really what I'd done. I mean, I wanted to do more, to be honest. ... But I have quite a lot of experience of flipping lectures and I've talked to many people about its pros and cons, and so that was my way into being the e-learning person for my department."

Indicative of the innovative outreaches of the TEL-focused culture that the LTU had hoped might be developed and enhanced by the Team TEL Champions project, Robert's pioneering practice is illustrated by his account of a specific new lecture delivery approach that he introduced:

"A particular innovation of mine, which we then integrated in our virtual learning environment, was the 'hot questions', as they're called - which is simply a very simple platform in which students enter a question about the video. ... And then they simply 'like' a question which they like, and you get a peer ranking system. So we've just had a lecture on evolution - and somebody might ask a question: If natural selection chooses what's the most hip for propagation, how come skinny women are seen as attractive today? Y'know, everyone likes that - so that gets 20 'likes'. And the professor will come along to the flipped lecture and use the top five or six 'liked' questions, and they project them on the screen and the student tends to read them out for the audience. So, again, with the audience we build that community of learners."

If Brian and Robert are representative of Premiership University's departmental TEL champions, then a valuable legacy of the Team TEL Champions project would certainly appear to be the sustained promotion of TEL across the university. In Brian's case this seems to be through a rather conventional champion-like support and advisory role; in Robert's case, the championing is more indirect: through his acting as a high-profile exemplar of innovative practice that has the potential to inspire and motivate colleagues to follow his lead, or to approach him for advice.

Among our case study institutions, Premiership University was distinct in another respect: the championing of TEL was not confined to peer support or academic leadership from or among 'rank-and-file' or junior colleagues; it was also practised by the institution's senior management team, creating another layer of champions to support the strategic change initiative.

Senior champions: top-level support for the TEL strategy

In contrast to the reported experiences of several TEL-focused change agents presented in the other cases analyses, many of the TEL-related achievements identified by Alison and Donald were attributed to strong support from senior management. Alison in particular was quite effusive in her praise of the pro-vice-chancellor for education, Howard, to whom she reported: 'He just has come in like a breath of fresh air - really, really championing in the education!'

Howard was apparently a hands-on leader; not content simply to put his name to initiatives, he offered real, practical support – indeed, he had helped Alison finalise the e-learning strategy, most of which had been drafted before his appointment, almost two years earlier⁴¹. Alison spoke of him:

"It's fantastic to have Howard, who knows what he wants. He will give us a lead and make sure that it happens - make sure that there are, y'know, concrete actions. He's been very, very good - a good, sort of, advocate for us."

Both Alison and Donald illustrated the nature of Howard's hands-on leadership approach:

"He does take an interest in the, kind of, more nitty gritty level as well And I think that's really good, for somebody at that kind of level to, sort of, be interested. We did something with a small group of staff, and he came, and did a, kind of, an award for them - about a year or so back. And I really appreciated that; it gives a, kind of, nice sign that the top level management is interested in the people."

(Alison, director, LTU)

"Howard will come to events. Y'know, I have regular lunchtime seminars and stuff and he will come and talk about things, and stand up and talk and introduce himself, about all sorts of stuff. So that's really appreciated, I think."

(Donald, leader, LTU team)

A second senior champion – also fairly recently appointed - was then identified as having been very supportive of the LTU's work:

"Ted, the director of Information Services, just came in and looked at what we were doing and looked at what the mission of the institution was, and said, 'Well, ok, let's look at how we can best deliver support for you'. So he's been, again, a kind of champion for us. In his case, he was determined that we got this e-learning strategy in, and that it was strongly visionary; it wasn't just doing more of the same. ... And I was having one-to-ones with him - although he's not my manager, there's somebody else in between us - but I was having one-to-ones with him, which was unprecedented."

(Alison, director, LTU)

Finally, reference was made to a third senior champion – an appointment made by Howard:

"I think, with Howard, he's been better than I would have hoped because he came from an academic background but not an education background. ... But he has proved really, really, really good. He's made a really astute appointment in the new director of our Learning and Teaching Development Centre. ... And they were rudderless for, probably, 10 years ... they had a terrible sequence of appointments, and ... so he's sorted that out - managed out the person who was not managing the team, got in a new director, Mary, who, again, she's been fantastic and a great supporter of our e-learning strategy."

Alison summed up her evaluation of these three senior colleagues: 'We're getting senior support in the way that we wouldn't have dreamed of before - which is fantastic. Without these people, none of this would have happened!'

Premiership champions: the winning team

Progress in implementing Premiership University's TEL-focused strategic change initiative has by all accounts been a team effort. And this is evidently a winning team. Of all five case analyses that we present, this is the one that was the least in need of support from the CLL initiative, for most of the knowledge and support needed to bring about the progressing strategic change was readily available in-house and was utilised effectively. This is a case of a HEI whose participation in a CLL project probably made little impact on its capacity to enhance student learning; that capacity was already there. But what this case analysis has done is

⁴¹ Howard willingly agreed to be interviewed for our study, but we were regrettably unable to find a mutually convenient date before our fieldwork was completed.

reveal something of the conditions and circumstances that make for effective leadership of TEL-focused strategic change – and which is examined in more depth in the final section of this report: a shared vision; committed colleagues; a well-maintained infrastructure; a good knowledge and understanding of learning technologies; a good grasp of the cultural context(s) within which the change must take place; and, most significantly, the full support of senior management, who were visibly championing – and sharing the driving of – the ongoing change effort. Most of these were evidently in fairly abundant supply at Premiership University, so the value of this case analysis has been to expose, by implicit contrast, their absence in the HEIs featured in the other case analyses, and to serve as a yardstick against which those case narratives may be measured.

Appendix 5: case analysis 5

Fighting competing priorities: putting TEL on the institutional agenda

Background: project focus and impetus

For the institutional director of e-learning at Prestigious University, the CLL initiative seemed attractive because it offered the opportunity for introspection and taking stock: 'It was a chance for us to sit back and look at what's happening at institutional level. It was also a chance for us to, sort of, get away from the 9 to 5 job, step back a bit and think about what we're doing'. The idea for the specific project to bid for came out of discussion among the learning technology support (LTS) team of six: they settled on requesting support for a project focused on three distance learning courses, located in three departments. In consultation with, and supported by, the respective heads of department, the e-learning director submitted a successful application for support in analysing the needs of students registered on the three courses, and examining ways of better catering for them.

The rationale for the project reflected the LTS team's concern that, since the distance learning courses in question had all been quite recently developed, the academics delivering them may not necessarily have the knowledge and understanding needed to give students the support and service they needed and wanted:

"We've got this very traditional focus on what learning and teaching is. That's not to say that staff aren't doing interesting things, and students aren't, but people spend, kind of, seven hours in lectures and tutorials and things, and then suddenly distance learning was thrown into the mix!"

(LTS team member)

With what was, by all accounts, minimal input from the pro-vice-chancellor for student education (one e-learning advisor described the pro-vice-chancellor as 'the *official* sponsor' of the project), the LTS team identified the specific issues and questions that they wanted to be a key focus of the CLL project, including: how could academics teaching the blended learning courses make best use of the limited face-to-face time available to them? How could networks within the student cohort best be developed to promote networked learning? Should the current policy of postal distribution of textbooks be retained – or are there more efficient means of distributing set texts? Do distance learning students *want* e-delivery of set texts, or do they prefer to receive hard copy books? If e-format books are introduced, should they be in standard format, or compatible with students' own diverse devices?

An online learning expert consultant was assigned to work with those who had principally worked on the CLL project bid: the Prestigious University e-learning director and her LTS team.

From survey to strategy? The consultant's role and remit

It was decided that, bringing externality and objectivity that were likely to encourage candour and honesty, the CLL consultant would survey the student cohorts, work with the LTS team on analysing the data, and advise them how to address the implications of the findings. This was to be a qualitative survey, aimed at uncovering students' lived experiences: what it felt like to be a Prestigious University distance learner.

Yet the project was also intended to go beyond the confines of examining the university's limited distance learning provision; a ripple effect was anticipated to raise the profile of distance learning within the institutional teaching and learning strategy and, from this, to raise awareness at senior management level of the potential of TEL, and to kickstart a TEL-focused strategic change initiative. The consultant was expected to advise on how best to promote such awareness. Indeed, the e-learning director had hoped that, simply by meeting with and talking to the consultant, the different constituencies participating in the strategic conversation might take away with them a heightened recognition of the importance of TEL:

“Just the fact that you come from somewhere else gives you a very different - or people interact in a different way - and also the fact that you’re coming here just for one morning. So, y’know, other people will come and change their diary for that meeting because they’ve only got that one chance to talk, whereas they’ll put other people off within the institution.”

(E-learning director)

Uncovering the prestigious university distance learner

The CLL project at this pre-1992, research-intensive university involved a series of focus group discussions with distance learning students, and separate ones with staff who delivered distance learning courses. The LTS team found the findings very enlightening. They were struck by the lack of communication between the three distance learning courses:

“Essentially, we had three discrete groups doing distance learning in their own way and not really communicating.”

(LTS team member)

In relation to the principal focus of the survey - student perspectives – and the answers to some of the key questions they had hoped the project would address, the team acknowledged that the qualitative survey yielded:

“A rich picture of distance learners’ experiences, delivered in their own words.”

(E-learning director)

More specifically, the focus group discussions revealed that Prestigious University’s distance learning students recognise the calibre and experience of their cohort peers and, as a result, they appreciate activities that exploit this as a resource. It emerged that the students wanted more socialisation incorporated into course delivery, and many of them expressed a keenness to have access to the course alumni networks, rather than be confined to interacting only with their cohort peers.

In relation to support materials, although e-texts had been piloted, many students expressed a preference for retaining hard copy texts – not least because of concerns that no single tool that could display content from every publisher, allowing them to highlight and annotate text and share comments with their peers, was available in all countries.

Widened perspectives and ways forward: the benefits of the CLL project

Prestigious University’s e-learning director identified considerable value in the CLL project. Asked to quantify it in terms of the benefits it yielded, she unhesitatingly responded ‘I’d give it nine out of 10!’. She appreciated the insights the project had uncovered into how distance learners could be better supported, and, in turn, how she and her team could better support the academics delivering the programmes – for the focus groups with academics had also identified staff development issues that needed addressing. Distance learning, she felt, had now been placed on the agenda for institutional attention and development – on the pro-vice-chancellor’s radar. More specifically, she (the e-learning director) discerned the emergence of a wider perspective on what constitutes distance learning and which students should be categorised as distance learners:

“Last month we ran a distance learning workshop and ... staff from chemistry and modern languages ... said, ‘Well, we’ve got distance learners ... we’ve got students on placement, or who will go away and do a language abroad’. And some of them were saying, ‘We think students are distance learners when they leave our lectures or our seminars, and we need to support those as well’. So that’s been very positive. And it started us [the LTS team] thinking more about the technologies that we need to support them, but, more so, just making sure they’re involved in the decision-making process.”

(E-learning director)

As what was essentially an information-gathering exercise, the value of Prestigious University’s CLL project lay in its contribution to the professional development of at least two constituencies of staff: academics and learning technologists involved in distance learning provision or support. More tellingly, as the e-learning director emphasised, without the CLL participation, these issues – and the consensual commitment to addressing them - would almost certainly not have emerged. She attributed much of the project’s success to the CLL consultant, and was explicitly appreciative of her (the consultant’s) role - particularly her handling of the focus group discussions. In common with so many of our research participants’ evaluations of their respective CLL projects, the Prestigious University group identified the consultant’s externality and objectivity as key benefits.

Yet, though it had been hailed as a great success, the CLL project had been expected to yield institutional benefits that went beyond the enhancement of the university's distance learning provision. Hopes had been expressed – particularly by the LTS team - of a ripple effect that would propel TEL towards a much higher position on the institutional strategic change agenda than it had hitherto occupied. For the most part, it seemed, these were to become forlorn hopes.

Competing priorities: barriers to a TEL strategic change initiative

The much hoped-for agenda-shifting CLL legacy apparently failed to materialise. The e-learning director expressed her disappointment and frustration at the slow progress being made in updating the university's e-learning strategy. The key problems, she felt, were that the pro-vice-chancellor for student education was not fully on board. Moreover, underlying this ambivalence on the part of senior management, was the university's preoccupation with what was clearly a competing priority: research – a member of the LTS team remarked, 'we're a research-led university, so research always trumps teaching'; another complained: 'the digital learning instrument is not very high up the university priority':

Interviewer: "For all this work that you're doing - not just on the CLL, but in technology-enhanced learning generally - do you feel you've got support from up above?"

E-learning director: "Candidly, I don't think there's enough, no."

More specifically, the e-learning director conveyed her interpretation of the pro-vice-chancellor's stance on TEL, as it had been expressed in an interview with him, as part of the CLL project:

"The pro-vice-chancellor's view was that learning technologies should be just like a utility; so - you go into a room, there's a switch, you turn it on, the tech works, y'know, your projector works, you can project from this to screen - and that's it! And that was a disappointing response really for me, y'know. It's not just an add-on. ... So I think we're not good at seeing the big picture. ... And there's not really an individual who's at the right level, driving ... or really arguing, that technology-enhanced learning position. So, that's a problem."

(E-learning director)

The pro-vice-chancellor failed to respond to our request for an interview, so we are unable to present his version of his perspective, but the e-learning director's interpretation was evidently shared by others, including the CLL consultant. Similarly, an academic from one of the three departments that ran distance learning programmes corroborated the perception that there was no senior institutional TEL champion:

"There are individual [TEL] initiatives going on [across the university], in a kind of small, entrepreneurial way. And I think, organisationally, that's because there isn't a clear...I don't see a clear champion in the university whose role it is to make that happen."

(Academic, Prestigious University)

Unaware of any TEL or e-learning institutional strategy – 'No, there isn't that kind of strategic direction' – a senior professor shared the perception that the message cascaded down from senior management was that research is the pre-eminent institutional focus and priority and everything else must come lower down the pecking order. The issue, he observed, was that since teaching was generally considered effective, there was no perceived imperative to embrace TEL in a coherent or systematic manner – only if and when the university became aware of being left behind other research-intensive universities in this respect, he surmised, was there likely to be a TEL strategic change initiative. Perceptions of such institutional complacency about teaching enhancement – and problems it posed for getting TEL onto the agenda - were shared by the LTS team:

"One of the problems we've got is all our departments, I think, are rated in the top 10 for teaching - which is really unusual, and a bit of a surprise in some ways. Does that mean they're the top ten best at teaching and learning? No, I don't think it does; I just think it means that the students are happy."

(LTS team member)

Mobilising the student voice: the e-learning director strikes back

The CLL project at Prestigious University brought mixed fortunes. In many respects the e-learning director's satisfaction with it was justified: in terms of uncovering the 'lived experience' of the Prestigious University distance learning student, it was an unqualified success; the staff and student focus groups yielded a wealth of data that the LTS team then put to good use in supporting and initiating enhancements and improvements to the design and delivery of the three distance learning programmes.

But then the benefits, instead of gathering momentum, came up against too many barriers to continue on a trajectory that would take them as far as the university's senior management and its change agenda, and they ground to a halt. The barriers were a combination of complacency about teaching effectiveness and a commitment to the (largely TEL-light) *status quo*, underpinned by a lack of managerial will to embrace the digital revolution and recognise its potential. The strategic change initiative that the LTS team had dared to hope for remained an aspiration. The current teaching and learning strategy, the e-learning director lamented, was woefully inadequate:

"There's some nice aspirations ... but it's of no use really; it doesn't say what we want; it doesn't define how e-learning fits into our vision of what it's like to be a student at Prestigious, and what's important, and whether we're trying to use the technology to meet particular teaching goals. It just says: 'Oh, we'll try and be the best, and use the best', y'know - great! And we'll be a world class university!"

(E-learning director)

But the e-learning director was apparently not one to give up easily. Whilst a less determined warrior may have been deflated and demotivated at having had his/her advances blocked, she and her team regrouped and decided to employ different tactics in the battle for Prestigious University's TEL strategic development. They realised the potential of a valuable weapon: student opinion. What ensued was a project devised by the LTS team to systematically seek the views of students from across the whole university on their learning and study-related experiences. Employing and training students to run focus student groups and report back their findings, the team hoped that the data gathered through this exercise would provide the ammunition needed to fight the complacency that underpinned resistance to change and scepticism about TEL. The e-learning director outlined the key findings of project Students Speaking:

"A lot of it was: 'Yes, we want lecture capture' - because Prestigious University still doesn't provide that. ... And there was generally a claim for more consistency. ... And we can say [the project was] robust because we've got the statistics to show that it's representative of the cohort as a whole, and also we've managed to retain the students' own words."

(E-learning director)

The Students Speaking project represents a bottom-up attempt, on the part of a resourceful and enthusiastic potential change agent, to circumvent the barriers that had been placed in her way as she tried to promote the wider take-up of TEL and put it on her university's strategic change agenda. It was a postscript to the CLL project, and it was one of its legacies. What progress it will achieve at Prestigious University remains to be seen; it is early days, but the last time we spoke to her, the e-learning director was optimistic about the waves it was making in some quarters. Most significantly, it had succeeded in putting TEL on the agenda of the university's teaching and learning committee. In the right fora, it seems, the student voice has the capacity to reverberate loudly.

Author biographies

Linda Evans is professor of leadership and professional learning at the University of Leeds School of Education. Spanning both the compulsory and the higher education sectors, her research focuses on professional working life, including: professionalism and professional development; morale, job satisfaction and motivation; and leadership and management. She has authored five books, including *Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (1998, published by Cassell), and numerous articles and chapters. Her first edited book (with Jon Nixon), *Academic Identities in Higher Education: The Changing European Landscape*, was published by Bloomsbury in 2015. She is an associate editor of the journal, *Educational Management, Administration and Leadership*, and between 2010 and 2013 was editor-in-chief of *The International Journal for Researcher Development*. A former student of European studies and modern foreign languages, she is a fluent speaker of German and French and has a wide network of European colleagues, frequently engages with francophone researchers, and often presents her work in French. In 2011 she lived in Lyon as visiting professor at l'Institut Français de l'Éducation, within the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon. She is a vice-chair of the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) and the founding convenor of the SRHE's International Research and Researchers' Network.

Also employed at the University of Leeds, **Neil Morris** is chair of educational technology, innovation and change and the university's director of digital learning. He is an internationally recognised expert in digital learning, blended learning and leadership of teaching and learning. A national teaching fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), he has won a number of national awards for teaching excellence. He has extensive experience of leading strategic change for innovative teaching and learning at Leeds, and currently has academic leadership responsibility for implementing digital technologies across the institution, including MOOCs for FutureLearn, lecture capture, open educational resources, the virtual learning environment and student response handsets. Neil regularly advises higher education institutions on strategic leadership of learning and teaching, and speaks at many national and international events on digital strategy, and leadership of learning and teaching. He has developed and authored strategies and policies for the university, including the digital strategy for taught student education, the blended learning strategy, the audio and video recording policy, the MOOC vision and strategy, and the open educational resources policy. With a research background in neuroscience, his current research interests lie in educational technology, and online and blended learning. He has conducted several published research studies on the impact of mobile technologies on student learning and engagement and is the co-author with Stella Cottrell of *Study Skills Connected*, a Palgrave Macmillan textbook on using technology effectively to enhance learning, published in 2012.

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