ASSOCIATION FOR LEARNING TECHNOLOGY

Occasional Paper

Changing the learning landscape

CLL Consortium
Association for Learning Technology
The Higher Education Academy
Jisc
Leadership Foundation for Higher Education
National Union of Students

About the project

Changing the Learning Landscape is about enabling higher education institutions in England, including colleges of further education providing higher education, to bring about change in their strategic approaches to technology in learning and teaching. This project is led by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education in partnership with ALT, Higher Education Academy, JISC and the National Union of Students. All five partners were involved as a team in authoring this publication.

http://www.lfhe.ac.uk/en/programmes-events/your-university/cll/index.cfm

hashtag #cll1213

Corresponding author

John Slater is the Acting Director of Development at the Association for Learning Technology, UK. For any queries about this publication, please email john.slater@alt.ac.uk.

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Introduction

One of the problems facing those involved in delivering Higher Education is the need to approach the use of Learning Technology in a strategic fashion from a position of knowledge of what is possible and what resources and development are needed to bring about change, rather than to rely on anecdotes, external expertise and accidental evidence. Given the large sums of money that are being invested and the significant changes in learners and their preferred styles of learning, it is increasingly important better to understand the learning community, get the strategic decisions right, and move the use of learning technology from a largely cottage industry led by individuals into the institutional mainstream.

The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) together with its partners the Higher Education Academy (HEA), Jisc, the National Union of Students (NUS) and the Association for Learning Technology (ALT), bid successfully to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) for a programme to support the effective, strategic use of learning technologies. This was the first time that these five organisations had collaborated in this way. It brought about an effective combination of agencies and independent bodies.

The resulting "Changing the Learning Landscape" (CLL) programme assisted Higher Education institutions and those Further Education (FE) colleges funded by HEFCE for the delivery of HE, to work strategically in the area of the use of technology to support learning and teaching. The objective was to improve experiences for learners in an efficient institutional context. The programme was managed by The Leadership Foundation and ran during the 2012-13 academic year.

The aims were deliberately ambitious and involved encouraging institutions to plan and make strategic changes across their activities involving learning. Details of the aims and intended outcomes can be found on the website (http://www.lfhe.ac.uk/en/programmes-events/your-university/cll/index.cfm)

What did CLL do in its first year?

The programme was made up of three strands of activity, designed to support change at a number of levels within institutions. Student engagement was integral to all strands.

Strand 1: Intensive programme for leaders in Learning and Teaching

This six-month transformational programme comprised intensive modules, a practical strategic change project within each participating institution led by the institution, and expert coaching support by external experts. The programme included short residential modules, institutionally-hosted modules, online seminars and online action learning sets.

Strand 2: Consultancy Expertise to support Institutional Teams

Under this strand, short-term focused consultancy support was offered to institutions who wished to devise and implement step changes in their use of technology to support learning and teaching. Institutions were able to bid for appropriate consultancy to support the development and delivery of specific change projects, with intended and defined demonstrable impacts. Typically six days of support were offered which had to be delivered and used within a three-month period.

Strand 3: Continuing Professional Development for Academics and Educational developers

With a focus on effective practice in a digital age, significant face-to-face Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activity and resources were offered to academic staff with roles in programme and course leadership and those new to teaching; to educational developers with a Learning Technology responsibility; and others. There was a focus on the use of Open Educational Resources, especially those developed as part of various Jisc and other programmes.

Who is involved and what do they do for CLL?

Leadership Foundation for Higher Education

The LFHE is leading this unique partnership of five organisations working collaboratively on the CLL programme. CLL can achieve far greater impact than if this broad agenda were addressed as separate organisations. During 2012-13, the programme got off to a very quick start and has engaged 147 HE providers across England – this includes 27 FE colleges and 3 private providers, as well as a very wide range of universities and specialist higher education institutions.

This depth and breadth of engagement could not have been achieved in the timescale available, without effective collaboration through practice. The tasks of facilitating programmes, consultancy projects and workshops – all in support of the strong sense of purpose of bringing about a step change in English higher education – have enabled partners to understand one another's capabilities, expertise and challenges.

The LFHE has brought its trusted relationship with senior institutional leaders to bear in securing the engagement of colleagues such as Pro Vice-Chancellors (Learning and Teaching) and Directors of Learning and Teaching. It designed and co-delivered the leadership development strand of activities in CLL, and managed the activities of consultants who represent the full range of our partners. LFHE will continue their role in sustaining the support they provide to leaders through contributing to running a network which will reinforce an emerging community of practice of strategic change in technology-enhanced learning.

As a result, LFHE looks ahead to a promising 2013-14, in which it will work more strategically in partnership with institutions. LFHE will also have a platform from

which to build further collaborative activity, involving any potential combination of the partners. This will serve the sector well in adding greater value than 'the sum of the constituent parts'.

The Higher Education Academy

The HEA champions excellent learning and teaching in higher education. Its mission is to use its expertise and resources to support the HE community to enhance the quality and impact of learning and teaching. This is done by recognising and rewarding excellent teaching, bringing together people and resources to research and share best practice, and by helping to influence, shape and implement policy. Working in partnership to maximise the benefits for the HE community is fundamental to HEA goals

The HEA has contributed to all aspects of CLL's activities: to the strategic change programme for senior institutional leaders; to the consultancy strand supporting institutional initiatives to embed learning technologies; and to the programme of professional development activities within the institutions.

Through the professional development programme, a series of one-day workshops was delivered for academic staff and those working in development and other professional services roles to explore how learning technologies can enhance their work. The face-to-face events were supported by webinars and online resources. (Details of the programme can be found at www.heacademy.ac.uk/cll).

Eight events were designed for academic staff working in particular discipline areas: science and technology, engineering and mathematics; medicine and dentistry; social work; art and media; humanities; and social sciences. Each workshop had a different focus, such as social media, mobile learning, online learning and open practice, and involved expert speakers from the disciplines. The workshops were very 'hands-on' and provided participants with opportunities to try out new learning technologies and discuss them with their peers.

Four events focused on supporting those working in curriculum and teaching development roles in a range of academic contexts. These events were set within a framework of three key themes: knowledge and understanding, influencing strategy and change processes to enable the embedding of learning technologies and supporting continuing professional development. This part of the programme was developed in association with the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA), with inputs from all CLL partners and other organisations including the Heads of Educational Development Group (HEDG) and the Heads of eLearning Forum (HeLF).

There was an emphasis throughout on accessibility issues, with support of expertise from Jisc TechDis.

A particular feature and strength of the professional development programme as a whole was its focus on student perspectives and its involvement of students as partners in delivery of the events. Participants were encouraged to use Twitter for feedback and to share their learning with others. Participant tweets during the workshops can be seen at #cll1213.

The HEA was pleased to be able to add further value by offering an associated funding opportunity through the HEA's Embedding Learning Technologies (ELT) work. The fund allocated £5k to each workshop and participants were invited to bid for small grants to help them build on ideas from the workshops in their own academic and professional practice.

Jisc

Jisc provides digital services for UK education and research. It innovates for the sector while driving down costs through shared services and digital content. It runs the Janet network, one of the fastest and most efficient networks in the world, and provides a wealth of online resources for higher and further education learners and staff. It offers local, practical support and expert advice across a range of information technology and related legal issues. It also supports a research and development programme of activity focusing on digital futures. The Jisc vision is to make the UK the most digitally advanced education and research nation in the world.

CLL has been a fantastic opportunity for Jisc to reach out to individuals and institutions within the HE community. Jisc has been able to make the most of its ability to provide expert advice and support, based on the research and development work that it has been doing with the community for many years, and has benefitted from the interaction with the partners in the programme.

Jisc is working with CLL partners across the programme in the following ways:

- Giving senior managers the ideas and tools they need to embed change within their institutions and supporting them and their staff on the practical implementation of these changes. This involves the use of learning technologies to transform teaching and learning.
- Providing expert advice and strategies on a variety of projects. For instance, institutions have been helped to develop their technology enhanced learning strategy by analysing their needs, designing a plan for the future, and providing practical support during the process. In other institutions Jisc are advising on e-portfolios, assessment and digital literacies.
- Supporting the professional development of staff through providing speakers and content for workshops and discussion sessions. This is offered to staff in a variety of roles across academic support, libraries and learning technology. It helps them engage with learning technology to support change within their organisations.

National Union of Students

Changing the Learning Landscape has developed the space for students to actively participate in generating innovations and new cultures in institutional communities, rather than be passive consumers of their education. This has created a cultural shift: the opportunity for students to gain an understanding of institutional priorities and 'the big picture', and co-develop an agenda for change, rather than only being involved in the traditional feedback exercises or tactical implementation. The eagerness of institutional staff in CLL for partnering with

students demonstrates the drive from both students and institutions to change the nature of their relationship.

NUS has been active in all strands of CLL, with a focus on enabling students as drivers of innovative practice. Engaging with the diverse institutions which are part of CLL as well as with their students' unions has given NUS a unique lens through which to contrast the needs of its membership at different types of institutions when undergoing strategic change. This will allow NUS to enhance its work as an organisation, particularly with an improved understanding of those students' unions that may normally have less capacity to network nationally. During the programme, all teams have been keen to explore student involvement in their projects beyond the 'usual suspects', as there is a recognition of the capabilities of students beyond those who consider themselves tech-savvy.

The ability to draw on the collective expertise and networks of the CLL partner organisations has allowed NUS to create a partnership in the sector that mirrors that which it would like to see developing within institutions. The opportunity to work more closely in an initiative with ALT and Jisc has been particularly exciting as NUS has only recently begun to explore technology-enhanced learning. Students involved in CLL have identified their enthusiasm for sharing practices across institutions in technology-enhanced learning, and this is being fostered through the programme and the links with CLL partners, such as the Jisc-funded National Student Change Agents Network.

CLL has also driven changes in the internal practice of NUS. NUS will be holding annual training from summer 2013 in student involvement in technology-enhanced learning projects. This includes working more closely with its unions to encourage structures for improved transition on long-term projects from year to year, which was a concern of a number of institutional teams during the programme. It has also begun to produce regular technology briefings for its membership and is developing a repository of best practice in engaging students to enact changes in teaching and learning within an institution.

Changing the Learning Landscape has been a collaborative venture between staff and students in bringing about changes in higher education. NUS values this type of partnership, the implications of which reach beyond the walls of the institution – it cultivates in students the confidence and agency to shape their environments and creates a lifelong drive for engaging with their learning.

Association for Learning Technology

As the leading professional and membership body for those actively involved in bringing about the practicalities of the changes, ALT has found involvement in CLL to be very advantageous for its members. ALT has worked with the NUS for some time and has a policy of having learner representation across governance and core activities. ALT has also previously worked with the HEA (on its Certified Membership scheme CMALT in relation to the UKPSF) and LFHE (on the development a MOOC project that ran in 2013 with over 1300 participants to give

an introduction to the use of Learning Technology in education delivery and became part of the staff development offering), and with Jisc (which has involved ALT in a number of activities). However, this is the first time that ALT has worked with all of the partners in a single project.

ALT has been involved in all three strands.

- In Strand 1, it took part in the team coaching activity and helped to develop the programme.
- In Strand 2, it provided significant consultancy effort in a range of projects in varied areas such as networks of champions, development of strategies, assessment and feedback, and resources.
- In Strand 3, it provided advice on programmes and various electronic opportunities for staff development.

Learning technologists in institutions have previously often been asked to work in silos to briefs that have not had much if any learner input. A culture of involving the learners more fully in strategic and tactical aspects of delivering learning gives a better foundation for the successful deployment of learning technology and this major driver of CLL should lead to better use of technology and hence to more effective delivery. The national partnership aspects of CLL need to be increasingly reflected in partnerships within the institution and the Strand 1 projects give good exemplars of this in action.

For those involved from the ALT side, there has been learning too. Involvement in the strategic parts of the programme has enabled ALT better to place its own work and that of its members into the context of institutional strategy and priorities. Interaction with learners as part of implementation teams has been a benefit to those involved in team coaching and consultancy. ALT has been able better to identify priorities for its own strategy and future actions that should help make our members more effective as part of their institutional team.

Impact and Evaluation

What did we do?

An external evaluator (Professor Patsy Cullen) was appointed early in the process and provided formative input through attendance at meetings and events, a set of blogs and think pieces, and otherwise. She has authored summative reports on each area and on the programme holistically. This section is based on her findings.

CLL focused on achieving strategic change, on supporting sustainable innovation through targeted projects and on developing the skills of individual staff. Almost 150 institutions took part in at least one CLL activity during the year.

Part of the role of the External Evaluator was to talk to participants to develop a picture of what a digitally engaged university (including HE in FE and Colleges) looks like. This is still very much 'work in progress' and at this stage it is more

about the questions we should be asking rather than defining solutions. This section looks at progress so far. All quotations come from interviews with participants, written feedback following events, and from presentations made by institutional representatives.

The CLL programme (described above) engaged a broad spectrum of HE staff and students and has been successful in breaking down the 'silos' which can obstruct effective change. The opportunity to work with colleagues and learners from different disciplines and professions in new ways has been one of the most valued features of CLL.

What did we learn?

The majority of CLL participants are, as yet, still at the questioning and information gathering stage of implementing strategic change around the use of digital technology. What this programme has done so far is to highlight some of the cultural issues which have a significant effect on the implementation of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) in HE, such as 'the rapid change in socio-technical practice versus the slow change in scholarly and professional practice' and the need 'to make change feel as though we are going somewhere, not running away'.

This is what CLL participants say they have learnt from the programme:
- Strategic change is about people more than about technology. 'How do we address resistance to change?'
- An emerging appetite for collaborative activity across the sector for networking and support
- The need to make time and space for cultural change initiatives: how to achieve a balance between managing the 'everyday' and committing to innovation and change
- The need for whole institutional conversations: 'how do you break out of the silos and get people working together?'
- The importance of relating use of technology to appropriate pedagogy: 'We've gone a long way forward in clarification, the link between curriculum and technology is now more concrete'
- The transient and ephemeral nature of much contemporary communication: 'the sound-bite nature of the technology'
- The challenges of digital identity 'digital identity – establishing, maintaining and safeguarding'
- The importance of a robust and flexible technical infrastructure
- How to develop the digital literacy of staff and students
- The value of involving students in developing TEL: ' we need to engage more with students and empower them to drive technology driven change'

What impact is CLL having?

CLL's main aim is to enhance the student experience, so here are some of the practical steps that the participants are planning to take; several cited league tables, National Student Survey, retention and student satisfaction as drivers for the introduction of TEL:

- 'Students should see a more joined up approach to electronic assessment and feedback; lecture capture. More uniformity of provision and a more consistent student experience'
- 'We're using virtual conferencing [with distance-learning students]. Students wax lyrical, it changes the way they learn, they feel part of a learning community, enhances their interaction with their tutor.'
- '[I'm going to] design an induction for 1st years using social media to encourage interaction, create a sense of community and prepare [them] for academic study'.
- Various respondents were enthused by seeing practical examples of technology in action and are now using such products as Scoop.it, Padlet, wikis, blogs and mini-Moocs.
- 'My aim is to address university complacency around reputation, recruitment, retention and student satisfaction. There is concern about slipping down league tables and lower scores in NSS.'
- 'Enabling students to feel part of a community – reducing distance. This should improve retention rates on Distance Learning programmes. We have scope within NSS for improvement in this area.'
- 'Technological change is continuing especially in M[obile]-learning: students are keen to use their own devices (mainly smart phones) and want to use them to engage with learning.'
- 'We're looking at staff development opportunities and also linking into our accredited CPD framework by adding an e-learning stream'

Evaluation conclusion

The CLL evaluation so far indicates that *individuals* are changing the way they engage with and use digital technology. However, they all say that it is too early to identify what impact these behaviours will have on *institutional* culture and strategy. To extend the metaphor of the Learning Landscape, individual institutions need to provide fertile environments in which change can flourish. The first seeds have now been sown and are starting to take root.

Next steps

The consortium has been granted funds for further activity in 2013-4. While reduced from 2012-3, they are significant and it is intended to move some activities towards more sustainable models.

The aims are:

- To strengthen the capacity of English HE institutions, including FE colleges providing HE, to initiate and embed strategic approaches to online learning and teaching.
- To widen and sustain a cadre of senior institutional managers of learning and teaching who are able to enhance student and staff learning through strategic leadership of online technologies.

- To challenge and support institutions and students to engage in partnership in shaping the use by HE providers of online learning and teaching.
- To facilitate the development of innovative institutional strategy, and embedding through best practice in online learning and teaching.
- To ensure that a sustainable support structure is in place by July 2014 so as to continue to promote changes in the overall learning landscape and develop, embed and disseminate good practice in strategic approaches to online learning and teaching.

The starting point of engagement in 2013-14 will be a strategic conversation between an institution including representation from the student body, with an experienced change consultant allocated to the institution from amongst a tightly-managed group largely comprising senior staff from the partner organisations. This will lead to a jointly agreed plan of action. Institutions will be invited to take up further components from a "menu" with agreed joint financing of these elements.

For example, this could take the form of some of the following:
- Strategy development activity through facilitation (engaging top management team).
- Working with a change consultant in the capacity of advisor, mentor or coach.
- Small scale change academy type events.
- In-house programmes to develop skills internally for key figures to act as internal change agents / consultants.
- The provision of specific technical expertise.

Evaluation will continue. Evaluation of the 2012-3 activities will continue to help address the longer term aspects of strategic change as well as evaluation of the work in 2013-4. Many of the consortium partners have had experience of evaluations that ended too soon.

Uptake in 2012-3 demonstrates the perceived need for activities of this sort. 2013-4 will concentrate more on the strategic aspects of the process leaving institutions to address the more routine aspects of being prepared to move forward to change the landscape.

Conclusion

CLL has helped a significant number of those in England delivering HE to think more strategically about the use of Learning Technology as an increasingly important method for the delivery of learning. Areas of specific importance to those institutions taking part were assessment and feedback, the use of mobile devices and social networking, and the organised use of Open Educational Resources. A further significant step forward has been the involvement of learners and their strategic representatives – in planning, fact finding, consulting and implementation.

The consortium, bringing together expertise in Leadership, Learning Technology, Staff Development and Resources for both with practitioners and learners, was well placed to carry out the CLL tasks. The partnership enabled the achievement of more than if the project had just been carried out through normal business separately.

Association for Learning Technology
Gipsy Lane
Headington
Oxford
OX3 OBP

Tel: +44 (0)1865 484 125
Fax: +44 (0)1865 484 165

Registered charity number: 1063519

http://www.alt.ac.uk/
@A_L_T

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