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Survival or Natural Death? Issues Related to the Sustainability of Writing across the Curriculum Programmes

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Abstract

This paper examines the issue of sustainability in Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programmes, focusing on the role of 'bottom up' initiatives in their development and spread. It argues that, although this element is essential for the start up of WAC initiatives, sustainability can only be achieved through institutionalization, a process requiring 'top down' measures. Since both bottom up and top down approaches are essential to successful implementation, it is critical to find the right balance between both approaches. The experience of WAC implementation at the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies, Jamaica is used as a context within which to examine these issues. This example demonstrates a mix of bottom up and top down implementation approaches, but with insufficient top down commitment to guarantee sustainability. It concludes by looking at lessons learned and areas of continued activism which have borne some fruit. It is suggested that the issue of sustainability in the case of grassroots advocates is perhaps better conceptualized as sustained efforts to establish programmes, rather than programme sustainability *per se*.

Introduction

WAC: The genesis

The genesis of the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) movement in the 1960s was as a result of the confluence of socio-cultural, political and linguistic ideologies in the United States and Britain. In the case of the US, the revival of an egalitarian-based framework for social and educational thought gave rise to the promotion of the classroom as a community, as well as the concept of student-centred pedagogy. In Britain, the focus on the personal, social and linguistic development of students led to 'a personal growth model based on principles of language in operation and creative expression' (Kantor 1983: 176 cited in Russell 2002: 273). This expressivist approach to learning took the form of dramatic presentations and personal responses to literature as well as encouragement for and support of students' own creative writing endeavours (Russell 2002).

The confluence of US communitarian and British expressivist ideologies was evident at the 1966 Dartmouth Seminar (a meeting of National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE] leaders and their British counterparts from the National Association of Teachers of English [NATE]). There, Britton and

his colleagues provided the requisite theoretical framework which linked the development of writing in the disciplines with personal writing – a connection which had yet to be explored by their American counterparts (Russell 2002).

The theoretical underpinnings of what would later evolve into the WAC movement were further strengthened by Emig, one of America's most prominent writing researchers in the 1970s, whose essay 'Writing as a Mode of Learning' (1977), offered evidence of the powerful connection between writing and learning. Drawing on the work of Continental psychologists such as Piaget and Vygotski and theories from America's Dewey and Bruner, Emig argues that the analytical cognitive processes involved in ordering language, and the benefits of recording and graphically representing language, make writing a powerful mode for learning.

Elsewhere, outside of the United States, in places such as the UK and Europe, formalized writing programmes in higher education developed much later and have been less widespread than US-based WAC programmes. This notion is supported by Mullin (2006) who contends that although Rhetoric and core programmes in writing constitute an important component of degree programmes in UK universities, they have never acquired the massive reach of the Rhetoric and Composition and Communication Studies programmes in the US. Indeed, this is ironic considering that it was British scholars whose ideologies provided the theoretical framework necessary for the development of WAC pedagogy.

The foregoing discussion has critical implications for the current paper in which the US, where WAC programmes have had a stronger tradition and wider reach, is the dominant point of reference. As a result, there has been more research and publication in this context on a wide range of WAC-related issues – implementation, sustainability, and assessment. Moreover, the writing intervention discussed in this paper is more closely aligned to WAC pedagogy and practice than it is to the UK or European model of developmental writing, often referred to as Academic Literacies.

Second, in discussing WAC implementation within the context of the Commonwealth Caribbean, we hope to contribute to the expanding field of cross-cultural, transnational and international comparative studies on academic writing and writing pedagogy. This goal is consistent with the comment of Ganobcsik-Williams that '[...] although institutional circumstances and national priorities for education may differ, those interested in developing student writing can learn from and contribute to Academic Writing theory and pedagogy developed in other national contexts' (2006: xxiii).

Overview

WAC implementation models: bottom up activism, top down institutionalization

The WAC movement's rapid rate of development and far-reaching influence in the United States, Canada and internationally has been attested to by Thaiss, Porter and Steinke (2008), whose results indicate that there was a 48% increase as of 2008 in the number of US and Canadian institutions which had initiated WAC programmes since McLeod's earlier (1989) finding. The Thaiss survey consisted of 1250 US and Canadian respondents and 207 international respondents from 47 countries. In fact Townsend (2008) has indicated that an additional 208 respondents were committed to implementing WAC programmes at their institution.

The rapid growth of WAC is largely attributable to its usefulness as a tool for improving literacy, thinking, and learning about subjects across the disciplines, as well as increased interest in writing in the disciplines (Carson 1994). Furthermore, it is the view of many advocates that the rapid rate of growth and establishment of WAC at many colleges and universities is due primarily to the bottom up/grassroots advocacy of teaching staff (Anson 2006, Bellon 2000, Holdstein 2001 and Walvoord 1996).

A primary feature of a bottom up approach to programme implementation is that it provides a forum for interested parties to introduce and discuss key areas of concern. This type of interaction is often conducive to the conceptualization of innovative and creative strategies to deal with issues in question (Panda 2007). Panda further argues that 'this approach taps the indigenous knowledge bases and local expertise [...] synthesises and systematises the lessons learned and disseminates those among the masses' (2007: 6).

In many respects, the propagation of WAC ideology and pedagogy follows this pattern. For instance, according to Anson (2006), WAC implementation was motivated by concerns relating to the pivotal role of writing in students' intellectual development and career preparation. Those involved in WAC advocacy were focused on persuading teachers in other disciplines to 'incorporate writing into their instruction for a variety of purposes' (Anson 2006:101) rather than on concerns such as the role of WAC programmes in institutional contexts and continuity over the long term. McLeod and Soven (2000) lend support to this in their contention that up to the early 1990s, WAC was still very much a bottom up phenomenon, led by a few dedicated faculty who had to contend with some administrative skepticism about the idea.

In many instances, this bottom up approach involved lower and mid-level academics taking it upon themselves to initiate and sustain programmes to enhance the quality of the educational experience of the student body (Walvoord 1996). This type of advocacy was evidenced primarily by the staging of workshops, and the promotion of 'linked' or team-taught courses or student 'fellows' attached to courses in the disciplines. As Walvoord (1996: 63) suggests, 'workshops were the backbone of the WAC movement, and they tended to generate high energy and enthusiasm'.

Localized efforts such as these are more likely to be sensitive to contextual nuances such as specific disciplinary/departmental needs and requirements. The bottom up approach of WAC proponents, therefore, serves to encourage teachers within the various disciplines to engage in curricular reform that incorporates WAC strategies. In fact, Durfee *et al.* (1991) argue that this type of informal approach has the potential for involving large numbers of teachers in the disciplines, particularly those who like to meet in workshops with fellow teachers. These contentions are supported by the findings of a survey undertaken by Miraglia and McLeod (1997) which found that grassroots advocacy and the support of teaching staff was one of three key components in WAC mature programme longevity.

On the other hand, one of the consequences of a primarily bottom up approach to the implementation of programmes such as WAC, is the absence of central administrative involvement in its implementation. The effect is a lack of funding and/or approved curricular revision to support the WAC initiatives. This assertion is entirely consistent with the findings of Miraglia and McLeod (1997) which highlight the importance of funding and administrative – top down – support to the success of WAC programmes. In addition to this, Russell (1987) has pointed to the pivotal role of central administrative entities in nurturing and monitoring WAC-related curricular changes. These include approval of writing-intensive courses¹ and ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants are properly prepared for delivering such courses, overseeing writing placement and writing proficiency exams and, where necessary, monitoring program evaluation efforts.

Programmes which are primarily top down in implementation design and structure are more likely to have a wider reach than those emerging from the grassroots level, and for this reason are also likely to have a greater impact (Citizens First 2008). This centralized model would enable quicker and easier programme implementation, more straightforward management and availability and, of course assurance of sustainability due to funding. The latter issue of funding would be a major consideration to programmes such as WAC, as bottom up advocates may find it difficult to commandeer the necessary financial and institutional resources for the sustainability of the programme since deployment of such resources is the prerogative of those at the top of the hierarchy. Thus, sustainability, defined by Rogers (2003: 183) as the 'degree to which an innovation continues to be used over time after a diffusion program ends' can eventually become an area of weakness for an innovative program such as WAC in cases where there is no administrative support.

¹ A writing intensive (WI) course is more than simply a course that assigns considerable writing. It is instead a course in which students are provided with explicit opportunities, though targeted instruction, to improve their writing. In such a course writing must be tied to the course objectives and course outcomes. Additionally, the syllabus must reflect the critical role that writing plays in the course. Writing assignments in a WI course may be designed as a means to achieving mastery of course content, as a means to enable students to develop professional output, or as a balance between the two (University of Minnesota 2011).

At the same time, major disadvantages have been noted with the use of a primarily top down or top down only approach to programme implementation. These include lack of ownership and engagement with the programme on the part of stakeholders or participants, which often leads to low usage and ultimately fragmentation (Citizens First 2008). In keeping with this, Walvoord (1996) has suggested that a top down approach (institutionalization) to WAC may well disturb the balance of power between the teachers of English Language/Communication/Writing and teachers in the specific disciplines. Whereas the former were viewed in the advocacy stage as allies, they may very well be perceived under an institutionalized regime as enforcers. This, according to Walvoord (1996), could have a negative impact on collegiality and commitment to the implementation of WAC.

Therefore, since both the bottom up and top down approach offer advantages and disadvantages, WAC ideators and practitioners have advocated a balanced combination of top down and bottom up approaches to programme implementation (Miraglia and McLeod 1997, Mullin and Schorn 2007, Sandler 1992 and Townsend 2008).

Striking the Balance

Kells (2007: 89) has asserted that in order to attain success, developing WAC programmes need to be organic (community-based), systemic (institutionally-distributed), and sustainable (flexible and responsive). Earlier endorsement of this notion is to be found in the contentions of Miraglia and McLeod (1997) whose survey on successful WAC programmes highlighted that neither top down nor bottom up is sufficient on its own, and if either one was applied without the other, failure would be the likely result. A combination of both is thus the most desirable and effective option.

This is further exemplified by Mullin and Schorn's example of events at their institution — the University of Texas at Austin — which provides insight into what may happen to WAC programmes when administrators cut support, 'when directors retire and are not replaced (or replaced with contingent faculty), or when a program continually expands and its center collapses' (2007: 5). In this instance minimal guidelines failed to 'produce any concerted efforts to measure the effectiveness of the WAC pedagogy' (2007: 6) and failed to sustain the interest and motivation of the teaching staff.

At the same time, Sandler (1992) advises against administrators' attempting to initiate or sustain WAC programmes without the support of teaching staff or in a context of resistance as such programmes would probably be short lived. Speaking as an administrator who supported WAC implementation at her institution, Sandler strongly advocates a 'behind-the-scenes' stance in which the administrator provides funding and fosters the interest and dedication of teaching staff while allowing them to own the programme. In this way, staff would be given a free hand in developing and customizing the programme to fit the curriculum. This position is supported by Miraglia and McLeod (1997) who view the role of administrators as offering strong philosophical and fiscal support without attempting to micromanage the WAC programme. In other words, administrators should expend effort in acquiring resources to operate and staff WAC programmes without attempting to interfere with the daily running of the programme.

The stated characteristics of successful WAC programmes attest to the role of a balanced top down /bottom up approach to implementation as well as other critical factors. Some of these factors include integrating the institution's mission with the WAC programme as well as forming links with other programmes. In the first instance, Bean, Carrithers and Earenfight (2005 cited in Townsend 2008) were motivated to reform writing and critical thinking at the University of Seattle, based on this institution's Strategic Plan. Regarding linkages with other programmes, Mahala and Swilky (1994) have strongly recommended that WAC programmes identify with '*avant-garde*' interdisciplinary programmes such as cultural studies and women studies.

Autonomy, focus and stated goals as well as ongoing faculty development are also considered intrinsic to the success and longevity of WAC programmes (Townsend 2008). In the case of the former, WAC programmes thrive best with a clear understanding of goals and objectives and the autonomy to accomplish these (Walvoord 1996). A case in point is the successful implementation of Communication Across the Curriculum (CAC) programmes at Clemson and North Carolina State universities whose implementation plan demonstrated clarity of purpose, ongoing training for

participants and a high level of autonomy balanced with administrative support evidenced by institutional incentive for improved teaching.

The latter element – a reward structure that values teaching – has also been cited as being instrumental in the success of WAC programmes (Townsend 2008). Additionally, the meaningful integration of writing assignments with course goals and assessment and student engagement is also considered to be of paramount importance to WAC (Bean 1996, and Segall and Smart 2005).

The aforementioned indicators for WAC success serve to enhance our understanding of the elements which constitute effective implementation. They have also, in some instances, offered an explanation for the outcomes of our attempts to implement WAC at our institution. Details regarding this undertaking are outlined in the following section.

WAC: The UWI, Mona Experience

UWI context

At the UWI, institutional policy concerning the teaching of writing in English and WAC implementation has been shaped to a great extent by the sociolinguistic, socio-historic and cultural contexts of the Caribbean and, by extension, Jamaica. Current UWI language education policy is a legacy of the West Indian colonial past in which a dominant-subordinate relationship existed between the master/slave class and later, after emancipation, between the colonizer and the colonized. In this situation, the Creole² languages of subordinate groups held little or no validity, and even now, are not considered a legitimate means of communication by many.

On the other hand, the Standard variety of the colonizer's language – English in the case of Jamaica – was, and still is to a large extent, deemed to be the only valid and acceptable means of communication, both by the colonizer and the majority of the colonized. The language policy which was formulated by British colonial authorities successfully created the illusion that Standard English was the first language of the Creole-speaking population, giving rise to the myth of English-as-a-mother tongue in former Commonwealth Caribbean colonies (Craig 1976 and 1994). This has had a powerful influence on the thinking and decisions of UWI administrators and academics with respect to the nature and direction of English language education.

It is still assumed, for instance, that a Commonwealth Caribbean university would have a native English-speaking clientele. In addition, there is the complementary expectation that primary and secondary schools functioning monolingually in English would equip these students with the English language competence required of university entrants. Thus, the view has been and still is that there is no real place for the provision of English Language communication skills at the university level, as these skills have supposedly already been developed by students by the time they enter the institution (McLaren *et al.* 2009).

The influence of these misconceptions on the UWI's English language policy making is clearly exemplified by the fact that in the 1960s and 1970s – the first two decades of this education at the University – the sole English language course, 'Use of English', delivered to first year students, was not designated a university-wide requirement. Consequently, two academic communities, the Faculty of Social Sciences on all three campuses, and the Faculty of Engineering on the St. Augustine

² 'A Creole language, or simply a Creole, is a stable [...] language that [has originated] from a pidgin [language] that has [been] nativized (that is, acquired by children [...]). The vocabulary of a creole language consists of cognates from the parent languages, though there are often clear phonetic and semantic shifts. On the other hand, the grammar often has original features but may differ substantially from those of the parent languages. Most often, the vocabulary comes from the dominant group and the grammar from the subordinate group, where such stratification exists. For example, Jamaican Creole features largely English words superimposed on West African grammar'. (Wikipedia 2011)

campus, opted not to include it in their programmes of study, alleging that their crowded curricula could not accommodate it (McLaren *et al.* 2009).

The status of English language changed somewhat in 1997 when the University mandated that UWI faculties incorporate three 'foundation' courses into their three-year degree programmes, one of these being a Level 1 English language course which would be delivered to all first year students. The other two foundation courses were 'Science, Technology and Medicine', and 'Law Governance and Society', offered at Level 2 and Level 3, respectively. Notwithstanding, the academics responsible for teaching the English language courses, who had played no part in the decision-making process, viewed this policy as being contradictory, as resources made available for delivery were inadequate. For instance fewer hours were assigned to the new English language foundation course than to the former 'Use of English' course which, in the case of the Faculties of Pure and Applied Sciences and Medical Sciences, it was replacing. In addition, the duration of the course was one semester and not the two semesters of the 'Use of English' course (McLaren *et al.* 2009).

This meant, in effect, that although English language instruction was being offered to more students in all faculties, including those with no previous English language requirement, students in the Faculties of Medical Sciences and Pure and Applied Sciences, who had previously had the requirement, began to receive less English language instruction. It was thus apparent that English language instruction had no real place in the University, but given that it was already present and a case was made for it to be spread to all students, it would be accommodated without the commitment of any new resources. Indeed, as McLaren *et al.* (2009) contend, every effort would be made to use those resources already in place and spread them more thinly.

Thus the institutional environment into which WAC was introduced at UWI, Mona, was one in which the teaching of English language writing skills was not highly valued and one in which as few as possible of the already scarce resources were assigned for development in this area. It is important to note that this devaluing of the teaching of English language skills supersedes issues of historical heritage, such as those observed in the Caribbean. For instance, academics in the United States such as Stockdell-Giesler (2007) lament what they view as an identity crisis for institutions, departments and first-year writing programs, which compartmentalize writing faculty and perpetuate notions of writing as a second-class activity.

A case in point is that prior to WAC implementation at the UWI, Mona, the idea that English language teachers could instruct disciplinary experts on how to teach and evaluate their students would have been uniformly met with skepticism by many of these experts. At the same time, these same experts considered the teaching of writing skills as the sole responsibility of the English Language teaching staff. In keeping with this approach, the disciplines themselves remained autonomous and resistant to any outside interference which would require them to adapt teaching and learning practices to reinforce English language writing skills.

Implementation from the bottom up

Given Jamaica's status as a former colony of Britain, the choice of a US based writing pedagogy (WAC) for intervention, rather than a more British-oriented curricular approach such as EAP (English for Academic Purposes) or EOP (English for Occupational Purposes), merits explanation. The two-year writing project was conceptualized as one that would 'integrate English Language teaching and usage into all aspects of the education of students in order to address and rectify the failure of many students to experience writing as an integral component of their university education in general, and their academic discipline in particular' (English Language Section 2006).

These goals are consistent with WAC theory and principles, where writing is promoted as being of key importance in a university course of study as it not only improves learning, but also enhances critical thinking and analytical skills (Young 1999). Through writing, according to composition researchers such as Emig (1977), Kelly and Chen (1991) and Steglich (2000), learners become more actively engaged in the material being studied as they directly interact with ideas and integrate these into their thought processes. Another area of congruence between the goals of our proposed initiative and WAC pedagogy was the requirement that staff from all disciplines actively participate in the development of their students' writing competence, instead of viewing this as the sole responsibility of English Language teachers. The pilot project was thus named the WAC project.

For members of the English Language Section, the advent of WAC was a significant step forward in gaining recognition, at the interdisciplinary level, of the pivotal role of writing in the academic success and overall development of students. Notwithstanding, our goal of undertaking a campus-wide initiative was not realized, as funding was provided for the WAC initiative in only one Faculty – the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences. This was due to the fact that the request for ‘one-off’ funding for an English language initiative which eventually led to the WAC project came from a member of the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences. It happened that the staff member in question also chaired a committee responsible for the implementation of student-centred programmes and was interested in identifying and providing funding for a two-year project which would assist in enhancing the English language writing skills of science students (McLaren *et al.* 2009).

An approach for an intervention in writing in the disciplines meant that the English Language Section had to plan a type of intervention which was focused on the needs of the discipline. This called for close collaboration with the academics within the disciplines in order to develop both intervention strategies for their students and a research programme which would examine the impact of the interventions. The output would be jointly written academic articles involving both the disciplinary academic(s) and participating academics in the English Language Section.

It was apparent from the outset to those of us in the English Language Section who were involved in this project that our role would be that of change agents engaging in a bottom up approach to WAC implementation. This would be the case, as although this project had the blessings and good wishes of the Dean and other senior members of staff in the science faculty, there was no faculty-wide endorsement of WAC incorporation within the curriculum. There was also little interest and no formal recognition on the part of the university administration concerning this undertaking, which led us to speculate that the two year project would more than likely not extend beyond the stated time. Thus, the fact that there was not going to be uniform engagement across all the disciplines and departments in our endeavour, made us realize very soon that in order to successfully implement the project we would have to approach Heads of Department and members of staff individually to garner their support.

As has been indicated before, this type of advocacy from the bottom up is not without its merits, as in our case we were not only able to fully ‘own’ the programme, but we were also fully engaged with it through the support of like-minded individuals who made common cause with our undertaking. We also had full autonomy in how, when and where we implemented WAC and as indicated previously, autonomy in implementation is a contributing factor to successful WAC programmes (Walvoord 1996).

The WAC project was formally launched in January 2007 when the Department of Language, Linguistics and Philosophy hosted two WAC workshops delivered by Chris Anson, University Distinguished Professor of English at North Carolina State University. Teaching staff from all faculties at the Mona campus were invited as were staff from the UWI Cave Hill and St Augustine campuses. Subsequent WAC workshops were delivered to staff members in the Life Sciences Department, of the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences.

Outcomes and analysis

The members of the Life Sciences Department showed relatively high and positive levels of response and this was no doubt due in large part to the cooperation and support from the Head who was instrumental in securing an attendance of nearly 80% of his staff members at our training workshops. This was the department which showed the highest levels of interest and engagement amongst the academics and this Head’s support of WAC was seen as a response to the concerns of his staff members regarding the poor writing skills of students.

Furthermore, this response is viewed as another manifestation of the bottom up phenomenon as this Head of Department, being aware of this dissatisfaction from below regarding writing skills, fully embraced WAC once it was presented as a possible solution to these concerns. In so doing, he was responding to pressure from below for change. Notwithstanding, the actual implementation was more varied. Of the seventeen staff members exposed to WAC principles and pedagogy only seven (41%) are on record as formally integrating WAC strategies into five courses (Table 1).

In contrast to the positive response of the Head of Life Sciences, the Head of Chemistry offered little support for WAC and we thus attempted to ‘sell’ this initiative to individual staff members in this Department after failed attempts to get them to agree to a convenient time for attending a workshop. Our success rate here was lower than in Life Sciences, as we were only able to encourage three staff members (18%) to formally integrate WAC strategies into their courses. Table 1 below displays the Life Sciences and Chemistry courses to which WAC strategies were applied, as well as the type of strategies applied.

Table 1: Courses to which WAC Strategies Applied and Type of Strategy Applied

Course code	Course Name	WAC Strategy
BL05A	Preliminary Biology	Draft/Redraft & Feedback –Lab Reports
BL12C	Cells, Molecular Biology & Genetics	Entrance/Exit Slips
BL 20N	Ecology	Draft/Redraft of Lab Reports
BT33B	Medicinal & Economic Botany	Essay Draft/Redraft & Feedback
C20J	Chemical Analysis I	Exit Slips
BL31A	Coastal Management	Role Playing; Lensing
C34J	Project Evaluation And Management For Science Based Industries	Journals
C 21J	Inorganic Chemistry	Essay Draft/Redraft

Although other faculty members in Chemistry and Life Sciences and a few in the Departments of Physics and Mathematics and Computer Sciences also incorporated WAC strategies into their delivery of content, this was not done in a consistent or structured way.

Presumably, the Heads of these Departments and their staff members were less concerned about developing the writing skills of the course. This led us to speculate whether writing was being seen as less integral to these disciplines than it was to Life Sciences; or whether we were being confronted once more with the old philosophy and approach to learning which was that disciplines should remain autonomous and immune from any outside interference which would require them to adapt teaching and learning practices to reinforce English language writing skills. In order to gain further insight into the reasons for involvement or lack thereof, we interviewed both participants and non-participants. In the first instance those lecturers who decided to participate in the implementation of WAC strategies were as follows:

- deeply concerned about the poor writing skills of their students
- perceived writing as integral to students’ personal development and critical thinking skills
- viewed good writing skills as necessary to explaining and clarifying concepts in their course
- were concerned about the poor communication skills on the part of some graduates from their faculty, which they saw as leading to weak performance on the job.

At the same time, non participants attributed their reluctance to incorporate WAC based learning activities into the delivery of courses to the following:

- the additional workload that this would entail;

- the fact that student attendance at tutorials was not compulsory and for this reason it would be difficult to fully engage students and give feedback on writing; and
- the fact that enhanced focus on students' writing skills could not be adequately accommodated in the present system of course evaluation and assessment.

The concerns of non-participants demonstrate and concur with the view of others (Miraglia and McLeod 1997, Mullin and Schorn 2007, Sandler 1992 and Townsend 2008) that while the grassroots/bottom up approach serves to initiate the transformative process, the lack of institutional/top down endorsement via the provision of resources and a formal approach to curriculum reform often hinders the influence of this transformation and the extent to which it occurs. For instance, in the case under discussion, reluctance concerning the adoption of WAC strategies might have been allayed if the administration had put policies in place to facilitate curricular reform in this faculty.

Such policies would have ensured the training of all staff in WAC pedagogy, and the revision of the curriculum in such a way that writing proficiency would have become a part of course objectives and integrated into learning activities, which, as has been demonstrated (Bean 1996 and Segall and Smart 2005), is critical to the success of WAC programmes. In this way the majority of science lecturers would have been encouraged to take responsibility for their students' writing skills and to give competence in this area due weighting.

We also saw that students' engagement in writing initiatives would only be realized if they understood that their writing skills were being viewed by the university and their lecturers as an integral component of their performance. In this way, they would be motivated to make a sustained effort to enhance their competence in this area. Indeed, the view that students' learning and performance is largely influenced by teaching and assessment has been attested to by Enwistle (2000) and Wiske (1998). This is consistent with the position of Boud who states: 'Assessment methods and requirements probably have a greater influence on how and what students learn than any other single factor' (1998 24). These proposed policy decisions would not only enable the success of an institutionalized WAC programme, but they would also ensure its sustainability and vibrancy to a large extent.

Thus although a combination of top down/institutional support and bottom up advocacy is considered as only one of the many factors related to WAC success, our WAC implementation experience as activists who had some funding, much autonomy, clear goals, and no administrative endorsement, has demonstrated that most of those other factors hinge on institutional support coupled with bottom up advocacy. This has led us to conclude that the balanced synthesis of these two approaches is the most critical component in ensuring the success and sustainability of WAC programmes.

The way forward

Although the implementation thrust of the WAC project was not sustained after the end of the two year project because of the 'one-off' nature of funding, it is heartening that pockets of 'converts' who have seen the benefits of WAC strategies continue to make use of these in their delivery of course content. This is being done in consultation with the former WAC Project Coordinator who is also co-authoring research papers with members of the teaching staff on the outcomes of WAC intervention in courses.

Furthermore, ongoing activism on the part of WAC advocates within the English Language Section after the end of both the previously mentioned projects has resulted in the formulation of a five member WAC working group. The sustained efforts and achievements of this group are evidenced by the publication of a number of articles; the production of special issues of two journals – one concerning WAC, the other on Foundation/General Education courses; presentations at conferences on writing/WAC pedagogical issues; and most important, the recent award of a one year fellowship to establish a Communication Across the Curriculum (CAC) programme in the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences. This latter undertaking would involve activities which would lead to the infusion of a writing and speech component into select courses which would then be designated writing intensive and speech intensive.

As with the WAC initiative, however, there is no institutional support. In this instance, funding has come from the current Dean of Pure and Applied Sciences who has given his blessings and support without mandating faculty wide involvement. Once more, this initiative will be a bottom up undertaking which will target likeminded individuals, who in this case will largely comprise WAC 'converts', resulting again in a limited reach of the initiative. Therefore, as before we are attempting to implement a programme in a context where there is some funding, much autonomy, clear goals, and no administrative endorsement.

Nonetheless, even if our initial 'bottom up' activities have thus far not resulted in the desired administrative endorsement and institutionalization of WAC, our efforts have borne fruit: WAC is present and functioning on our campus and we have been afforded the opportunity to build on the WAC foundation via the establishment of a CAC programme. Therefore, perhaps for grassroots advocates such as ourselves, sustainability should really mean achievements gained through sustained efforts.

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