

**Doctorate in Professional Studies
(Learning and Teaching)**

**Of sea anemones and clownfish: exploring a
mutually beneficial approach to educational
development through Soft Systems
Methodology.**

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Glossary of terms and acronyms

General terms

ePDP, Electronic Personal Development Planning.

CETL, Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/tinits/cetl/

CPD, Continuing Professional Development (CPD). "Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a process by which individuals take control of their own learning and development, by engaging in an on-going process of reflection and action". Megginson and Whitaker (2003: 5).

HE, Higher Education.

HEAR, Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) is a suggested way of recording student achievement in higher education (HE) and is intended to provide more detailed information about a student's learning and achievement than the traditional degree classification system. It would be issued to students on graduation and will include and extend the existing record of academic achievement, as a transcript.

HEIs, Higher Education Institutions.

PDP, Personal Development Planning (PDP). One definition being, "a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and / or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational, and career development". QAA *et al* (2001: 1).

PDR, Personal Development Records (PDR). Defined by QAA *et al* (2001: 10 point 32) as, "a record of learning experiences and achievement, personal reflections and plans for self-improvement (Personal Records) that provide a unique resource to each individual. The information in such records is owned by the learner and their maintenance, authenticity and use is the responsibility of the individual. Institutions, through their support and guidance structures, and

requirements for a programme or award may however influence how this responsibility is exercised”.

PebblePad®, is a piece of commercial software initially developed by an external company Pebble Learning and the University of Wolverhampton. It is described as “a Personal Learning System being used in learning contexts as diverse as schools, colleges, universities and professional bodies; by learners, teachers and assessors; for PDP, CPD and L&T”. www.pebblelearning.co.uk

RAE, Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) is a national exercise to assess research quality in all UK HEIs. The results of the RAE are used by the Research Councils and the Higher Education Funding Council for England to apportion the amount of government funding each HEI receives.

UK PSF, UK Professional Standards Framework (UK PSF) for teaching and supporting learning, launched in February 2006, is a flexible framework which uses a descriptor-based approach to professional standards.
<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/policy/framework>

External organisations

CRA, the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA). A charitable national network organisation that seeks to, “promote the awareness of recording achievement and action planning processes as an important element in improving learning and progression throughout the world of education, training and employment”. CRA offers services aimed at supporting the implementation of progress files, personal development planning and e-portfolios. CRA is an associate member of the HEA. www.recordingachievement.org

GuildHE, states that it is ‘one of the two formal representative bodies for Higher Education in the UK’. It was founded in 1967 as the Standing Conference of Principals, registered as a company in 1992 and became GuildHE in 2006. <http://www.guildhe.ac.uk>

HEA, the Higher Education Academy (HEA). Their mission is to support the sector in providing the best possible learning experience for all students. Their strategic aims are to: 1. Identify, develop and disseminate evidence-informed approaches, 2. Broker and encourage the sharing of effective practice, 3. Support universities and colleges in bringing about strategic change, 4. Inform, influence and interpret policy, 5. Raise the status of teaching. www.highereducationacademy.ac.uk

HEFCE, the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE). This body distributes public money for teaching and research to universities and colleges. In doing so, it aims to promote high quality education and research, within a financially healthy sector. The Council also plays a key role in ensuring accountability and promoting good practice. www.hefce.ac.uk

IMS Global Consortium (IMS GLC) is a global, non-profit, member organisation that strives to enable the growth and impact of learning technology in the education and corporate learning sectors worldwide. IMS GLC members provide leadership in shaping and growing the learning industry through community development of interoperability and adoption practice standards and recognition of the return on investment from learning and educational technology. www.imsglobal.org

JISC, the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). Their mission is to provide world-class leadership in the innovative use of ICT to support education and research. JISC funds a national services portfolio and a range of programmes and projects. JISC focuses on 8 strategic themes: Network, Access management, Information environment, e-Resources, e-Learning, e-Research, e-Administration, Business and community engagement. www.jisc.ac.uk

QAA, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). Their mission is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. They work with higher education institutions to define academic standards and quality, and they carry out and publish reviews against these standards. Established in 1997, QAA is an independent body funded by subscriptions from UK universities and colleges of higher education, and through contracts with the main UK higher education funding bodies. www.qaa.ac.uk

QAA et al. Along with the QAA, other bodies across the UK also hold responsibility for standard setting and policy issues within HE. For the HE progress files these were: the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), The Committee of Scottish Higher Education Principals (CoSHEP), The Standing Conference of Principals (SCoP).

SEDA, the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA). This is the professional association for staff and educational developers in the UK, promoting innovation and good practice in higher education. www.seda.ac.uk

Subject Centres - HEA. The Subject Centres are part of the HEA. They provide subject-specific support for 'enhancing the student learning experience'. There are 24 Subject Centres located in higher education institutions. <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/subjectcentres>

Universities UK (UUK), states that it is 'the representative organisation for the UK's universities'. Its mission is 'to be the definitive voice for all universities in the UK, providing high quality leadership and support to our members to promote a successful and diverse higher education sector'. <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk>

University of Wolverhampton www.wlv.ac.uk

Academic Learning and Teaching Roles:

AD	Associate Dean
L & T	Learning and Teaching Co-ordinator
SDS	Student Development and Support Co-ordinator
TSL	Technology Supported Learning Co-ordinator

Academic Schools in the University up to 2009:

SAD	School of Art and Design
SAS	School of Applied Sciences
SCIT	School of Computing and Information Technology
SEBE	School of Engineering and Built Environments
SED	School of Education
HLSS	School of Humanities, Languages and Social Sciences
SLS	School of Legal Studies
SoH	School of Health
SSPAL	School of Sport, Performing Arts and Leisure
UWBS	University of Wolverhampton Business School

Academic School changes in 2009:

LSSC There was a merger between HLSS and SLS to create a new School of Law, Social Sciences and Communication

Blended Learning is an approach to learning and teaching which combines and aligns learning undertaken in face-to-face sessions with learning opportunities created online. www.wlv.ac.uk/blu

CETL: CIEL, the Centre for Excellence for Teaching and Learning: Critical Interventions for Enhanced Learning www.wlv.ac.uk/cetl

ePortfolio. Within the University of Wolverhampton an ePortfolio is defined as: "A system which allows users, in any of their learning identities, to selectively record any abilities, events, plans or thoughts that are personally significant; it allows these records to be linked, augmented or evidenced by other data sources and allows the user to integrate institutional data with their personal data. It provides tools for aggregating assets in multiple forms to diverse audiences and ensures absolute user-control over what is shared, with whom, for what purpose

and for how long. It is a personal repository; a personal journal; a feedback and collaboration system; and a digital theatre - where the audience is by invitation only". www.wlv.ac.uk/eportfolio

ePUG, is the University of Wolverhampton's ePortfolio Users Group

ILE, the Institute for Learning Enhancement (ILE). This is a small strategic department which helps to create, develop and support a teaching-intensive centre of academic excellence. It works with University staff to enhance the learning experience of all students through improvements in quality, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. www.wlv.ac.uk/ile

ILE was previous known as:

CELT, the Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching (2005 - 2008).

CELT was previously known as:

CeLT, the Centre for Learning and Teaching (1999 – 2005)

Learning Works. A major university-wide initiative to review all undergraduate courses, simplifying the course structures, clarifying course content and reviewing all course titles. www.wlv.ac.uk/learningworks

PACE, Personal, Academic, Career and Employability planning and development framework.

SMSA, Self Managed Scholarly Activity, part of an academics' contract of employment at the University of Wolverhampton.

UQEC, the University Quality Enhancement Committee (UQEC). Its purpose is to ensure that the University's academic provision (taught, award bearing and non-award bearing) is of high quality, meets required standards and enhances learning and teaching.

WOLF, Wolverhampton On-line Learning Framework. The purpose built in-house virtual learning environment at the University of Wolverhampton. www.wlv.ac.uk/wolf

Preface

The hardest part of my project so far has been deciding on a title that captures its complexity. For the last five years I had the working title: "Who or what motivates engagement in PDP?" As I am nearing the end of this research journey this title no longer seems adequate or appropriate. When asked to describe the characteristics of my project I came up with in no particular order; partnership, capacity, participation, mutual benefit, growth, peer, collegial, dynamic, tripartite, pluri-vocal, positionality, mentoring, multifaceted and visual. Therefore trying to capture the essence of my project in a short pithy title has been nigh-on impossible, hence, of sea anemones and clown fish, but why? Firstly there is a clear visual image that is conjured up by this title; visual imagery is an important part of my project methodology. Secondly it describes a symbiotic relationship. A relationship that is mutually beneficial to both parties. Without belabouring the image too much I did find further details about sea anemones and clownfish, which conjured-up a vivid image in my mind,

The fish rubs off nutrients onto the anemones' tentacles and in return receives a smearing of mucus from the anemone, giving them protection from its sting, after extended periods away; the fish will actually get stung by the anemone as they lose their protection.



As an educational developer do I hope that by engaging with discipline-based staff in their territory I hope that some practice I have been exposed to will rub off and nurture that group? And will I gain by having a layer of understanding which I will lose if I stay away from the discipline-based environment?

Summary

Of sea anemones and clownfish: exploring a mutually beneficial approach to educational development through Soft Systems Methodology.

This report presents a large scale exploration of the roles, practice and influence of members of staff in a central educational development department working alongside academic discipline-based teaching staff in a UK University. The project uses Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) for this exploration. The concept modelled within this doctoral project is one of developmental mentoring embedded in the management and design of an externally funded project – the Pathfinder Project. This includes using the characteristics of developmental mentoring and the five phases of the mentoring relationship. The concept model is compared to and discussed in a real-world situation of discipline-based teaching and learning. This activity takes place throughout the life span of the Pathfinder Project during the academic year 2007-08. This doctoral project heavily influenced the design and delivery of the Pathfinder Project although Pathfinder remains an entity in its own right. The doctoral project and the Pathfinder Project shared data however the analysis, findings, conclusions and recommendations are different. The work-based research questions which this doctoral project seeks to address are concerned with the means to develop ways for a central department to work most effectively with discipline-based teaching staff. The project outcomes offer a model for staff development that helps build staff capability and capacity. From a practitioner/researcher point of view, outcomes also suggest how the experiences and findings of this project can inform the work-based context for educational developers. This project report integrates project outcomes with a reflective critical commentary written in the first person. The project report includes original images throughout the text as could be expected from a user of SSM.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 The catalyst for my project

This is an investigation into a human activity system based around the roles, practice and influence of staff in a central educational development department working with academic discipline-based teaching staff to motivate student engagement with Personal Development Planning (PDP) in a UK University.

The catalyst for my project was a critical incident that I recorded and then reflected upon. During a staff development day for one Academic School, a discipline-based colleague (A) presented his experience of using the ePortfolio system for student assessments. I had been working very closely with (A), team-teaching with him in student workshops. (A) made the following comment to an audience of his discipline-based colleagues:

“Megan did something I didn’t ask her to do... I asked her to run a student workshop on PebblePad®, I thought she was just going to explain to my students how to use the software ... in other words how to upload files and push buttons ... but she didn’t do that. What she actually did was show my students how they could use different parts of the software. She showed them how to use templates such as, ‘my thoughts’ and ‘my action plan’ which I wasn’t expecting the students to use”.

I sat there somewhat mortified, as I could not have taught how to use the software without a reason why. I reflected on the situation that (A) was talking about and my perception of what he had asked his students to do. Students had been asked to create a Word document showing the correct use of the Harvard referencing system. In the workshop he expected his students to bring their completed Word document and to upload it into their account. As I was walking around helping students they kept asking me questions, such as,

“I don’t know what to do next?”

“Why have we done this?”

“Now what do I do with this word document?”

There were no questions on the software functionality. Without really thinking about my responses to his students, I said things such as,

“What do you think you have learnt by doing this exercise?”

“Why do you think we use references?”

I spoke to (A) after the staff development session as I was very concerned that I might have upset him by overstepping his expectations of my role. However, the opposite was the case. He was very generous and said that in fact he had just wanted to make sure that his students knew how to use Harvard, rather than extending the task by getting them to reflect on why they should use it and what sense they had made of the activity. What made me stop and reflect on this event was that (A) was one of my ‘champions’ of personal development planning (PDP) supported by an electronic ‘tool’ (ePDP) who was willing to try new things within his teaching. It raised a number of concerns for me. Firstly, that I had been assuming a level of staff understanding of PDP processes that perhaps was not accurate. Secondly, that the introduction of a new piece of software had concentrated some people on presenting the product to the students without a rationale for its use. Thirdly, that the people who were engaging with PDP and the ePortfolio system were my enthusiasts so I did not want to criticise them in any way. Finally, how could I as a member of staff in a central department, with no undergraduate students of my own, understand student engagement with PDP unless I worked with discipline-based colleagues? These reasons were the triggers for my project; it became increasingly clear to me that the aim of my research was to promote mutual growth. There was a mismatch between what I, as a member of a central department, had assumed and perceived was being delivered by discipline-based colleagues and what was happening in the classroom. What I experienced is eloquently described by Argyris and Schön (1996: 11) who suggest that,

“In Deweyan inquiry [...], doubt is constructed as the experience of a “problematic situation”, triggered by a mismatch between expected results of action and the results actually achieved. Such as mismatch – a surprise, as we experience it – blocks the flow of spontaneous activity and gives rise to thought and further action aimed at re-establishing that flow”.

This critical incident started me on a process of reflection-for-action (Cowan, 2006: 51) defined as,

“It is that reflection which establishes goals for subsequent learning or development, by identifying the needs, aspirations and objectives which will subsequently be prominent in the learner’s mind”.

1.2 My work-based context: educational development

The context for my work-based project is my membership of a small strategic central department. My role in this department is a theme throughout my report but my professional identity within that role was not something that I gave prominence to at the beginning of my work. However as the activities of my project progressed and my investigation deepened this became a crucial issue. I am an educational developer. What that means is open to interpretation but Gosling (2007: 2-4) suggests some common themes within this identity:

A commitment to teaching

Serendipity and career decision-making

Motivation to join and stay in educational development

I would also add to these ‘curiosity’ and a love of learning. You cannot train to become an educational developer or take any qualifications that will give you such a title. It does not belong to any one discipline other than that of ‘Learning and Teaching’ which is yet to be recognised as a discipline by such HE sector performance indicators as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). Gosling (2007: 4) suggests that educational developers emerge as,

“... a group of people with very different backgrounds and academic disciplines who nevertheless shared a common passion for improving teaching – their own and subsequently that of others”.

There are many different and varying models for an educational development ‘service’. Educational development generally is found in central departments or units, which can include quality enhancement, learning, teaching and assessment and e-Learning. Functions can include staff development, research

and resource development. What is safe to say is that no two 'units' are structurally alike as they are set within the context of their own university. Educational development is different to staff development though defining that difference can be difficult. Within my own context, staff development comes under the Personnel department and deals with all development and training issues. For example, health and safety, first aid, equal opportunities ... educational development concentrates on learning, teaching and assessment.

In 2004, Land suggested that educational development is 'a little understood activity' and I believe that this is still the case. Back in 1998, Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1998: 286) point out the rise in literature on learning and teaching practice, the kind of 'How to...' guides and research on the student experience. I would argue that the student experience and teaching and learning practice are still those areas that receive the most interest. What I am interested in investigating is not the 'How to ...' areas, but the relationships between a central educational development department and discipline-based colleagues as this, I believe, is still an area for exploration.

1.3 My work based context: boundaries

This project is not about PDP *per se* rather, it is intertwined as both topic and as an integral part of the main emphasis of this work, which explores working relationships. All who have taken part in this project and in the Pathfinder Project have experienced some form of personal development. The definition I am using of PDP is from QAA *et al* (2001: 1) which states that PDP is,

"a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development."

At the time of my project the QAA *et al* had produced a "Policy statement on a progress file for HE" (2000) and "Guidelines for HE Progress Files" (2001) that required all HE institutions to offer opportunities for all students to engage in PDP. Within these guidelines there was a perception created that these activities would, from the academic year 2005-06, be judged as part of an institutional quality audit. This raised the importance of PDP within HEIs. In my role as University Student Development and Support Co-ordinator I led and reported on

(both internally and externally) the institutional responses to the QAA *et al* guidelines (2001). As my project progressed the QAA *et al* guidelines (2001) have been reviewed and revised, finally being published as, "Personal development planning: guidance for institutional policy and practice in higher education" in 2009. I was asked to contribute to this review. The revised guidelines were seen by many PDP practitioners as a wasted opportunity to make a real difference to institutional PDP practice, as they have no sanctions if an institution decides to opt out of PDP. Across the sector there has been a small but significant loss of central posts relating to PDP implementation and many PDP practitioners at a recent CRA national event (2009) commented that their work has assumed less importance. As policy and practice becomes embedded, there is an argument for less central leadership as an initiative becomes part of mainstream activity. The sector-wide PDP initiative sets the sector and institutional scene for my research and the climate for change.

Over the course of my project, my own department, the Institute for Learning Enhancement (ILE), has been renamed and reconfigured twice. In 2005, when the University was awarded a Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) the department was named, the Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT). Then in 2008, it was re-configured into two separate entities; the Institute for Learning Enhancement and the CETL: Critical Interventions for Enhanced Learning (CIEL). This might seem to have little relevance to my project but it has affected and made more complex the perceptions of the roles, relationships and influence of those involved in this project. Despite complicating my project, the re-configurations have provided opportunities to suggest new ways of working. On my University's web site, ILE is described as, "a small department with wide impact". We support staff in educational research, curriculum innovation, blended learning and work-based learning across the University. During the time of my project, one of ILE's main tasks was to manage the implementation and evaluation of the institution's Learning and Teaching Strategy, PDP being positioned within this strategy.

On a personal level, my role within ILE and CETL: CIEL has changed over time. For the majority of time while working on this research, I was designated 0.5 Assistant Director of the CETL: CIEL and 0.5 as the University Student Development and Support Co-ordinator. This gave me two different but overlapping communities to work with. My ILE role now has a focus that includes blended learning and graduate attributes. Within blended learning, I am leading

on the development of opportunities for all students to participate in electronic personal development planning (ePDP) and developing the University's concept of graduate attributes. Both of these roles include developing ePortfolio pedagogy. The changes in my role over the last few years gave me a number of different formal and informal 'identities' but I still exist as part of a bigger learning and teaching system, although that system has changed and developed overtime. When this research begins (2006), I identified my formal sphere of operation learning and teaching structural model (Figure 1: 17).

At the centre of the learning and teaching structural model is ILE and the Academic School learning and teaching teams. In 2006, the academic teams consisted of an Associate Dean (AD) and up to three academics in designated roles of Learning and Teaching (L & T), Student Development and Support (SDS) and Technology Supported Learning (TSL) Co-ordinators.

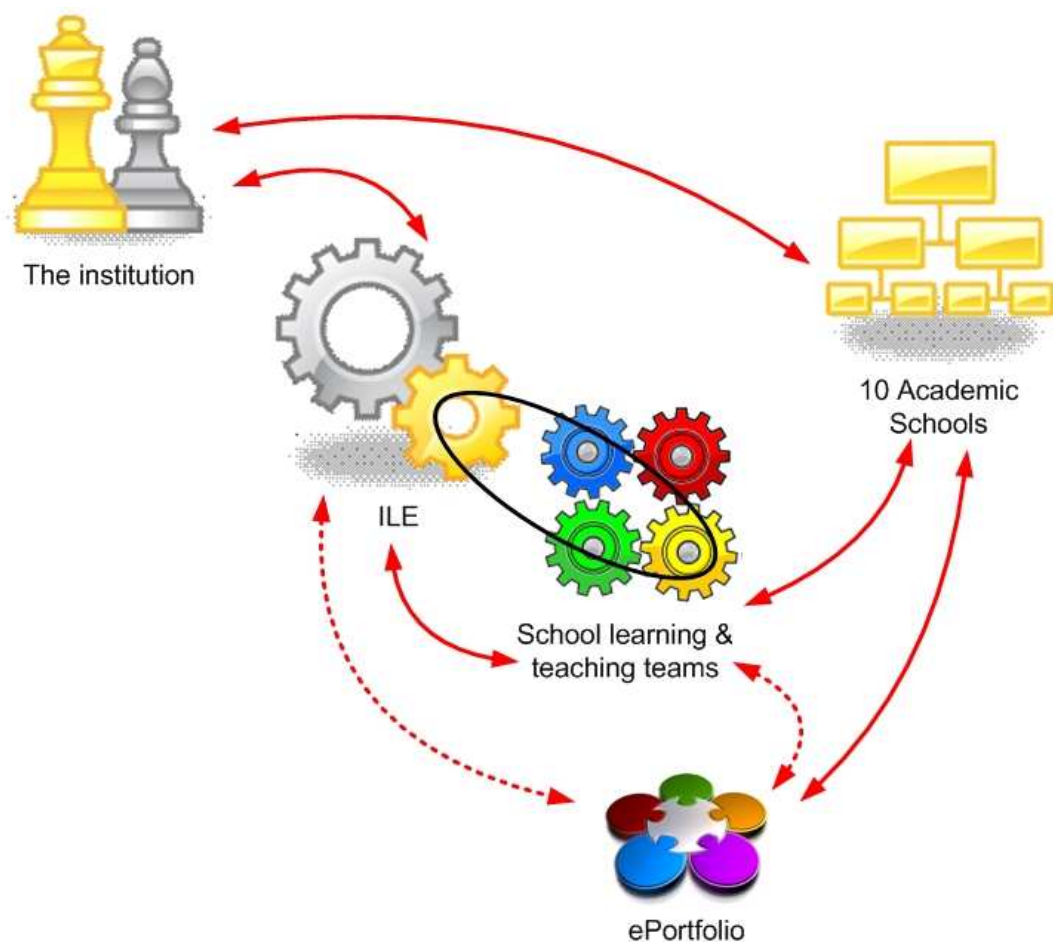


Figure 1 Learning and teaching structural model at the start of this project

This central structure I have also identified as the Learning and Teaching Holon (Figure 2: 18). The term 'holon' is used by Checkland (in Checkland and Scholes 1990: A28, A54) based on the work of Koestler (1967). In its simplest definition a holon is a complete system that exists within another larger system. It is autonomous but related to and influenced by the system to which it belongs.

In my project the Learning and Teaching Holon exists as an entity that oversees the operation of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy as part of the overall University's strategic plan. In some schools these co-ordinator posts were used to enable promotions, some were fractional appointments and some were conflated into one or two posts. Each school developed an approach that they thought best suited them. By developing a model, I perceived the institution as being strategically run through university-wide committees (shown as chess pieces in the model) responsible for receiving and ratifying the institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy. The Strategy itself is written and presented by ILE (shown as the large cog, in the model). The information included in this strategy comes from the Academic Schools (hierarchical structures) via their learning and teaching teams (shown as four smaller interconnecting cogs).

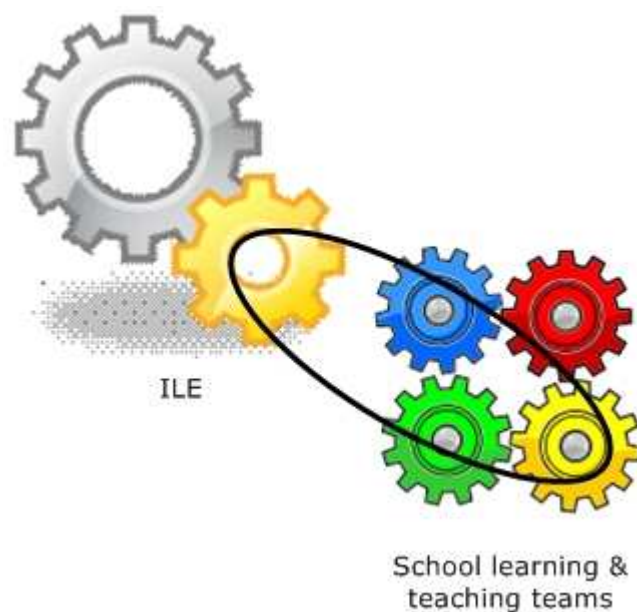


Figure 2 Learning and Teaching Holon

On a more informal basis, I was a member of an emergent group of ePortfolio practitioners. The evolving community of ePortfolio practice developed from the university-wide introduction of the PebblePad© software and, in particular, from

the growth of an ePortfolio Users Group (ePUG). This group consisted of early adopters of the software, principally from the academic schools that took part in the software pilot project.

PebblePad© was developed by the University and an outside software company Pebble Learning. The software is described by Pebble Learning (2008) as,

“PebblePad© is much more than an ePortfolio. It is a Personal Learning System being used in learning contexts as diverse as schools, colleges, universities and professional bodies; by learners, teachers and assessors; for Personal Development Planning, Continuing Professional Development and for Learning, Teaching and Assessment’

After the initial ePortfolio pilot, of which I was project manager, a temporary post of ePortfolio Co-ordinator was created to oversee the implementation of this software as a mainstream learning and teaching tool. The post-holder perceived their role as one of advocacy for the software and for the development of its use. They created the ePortfolio Users Group (ePUG) to help the early adopters of the software meet and share practice. At the start of the academic year 2005-06, PebblePad© was made available to all staff and students in the University. At the end of that year, the ePortfolio Co-ordinator left and that role was no longer thought necessary. Consequently, members of ePUG who were not part of their existing school learning and teaching teams felt that they no longer had an advocate for their work within the central department or in their own school.

At the start of my research there were a number of disparate groups who were ‘orbiting’ the software (Figure 3: 20). As well as ePUG, this included members of the learning and teaching community such as Student Development and Support (SDS) and Technology Supported Learning (TSL) Co-ordinators. Another ‘satellite’ consisted of staff who were implementing PDP but who were not necessarily using the PebblePad© software. Finally, there was a small emergent research mini-cluster looking at ePortfolio pedagogy mainly based on practice in Education and Health related disciplines. ePUG and the mini-cluster were small but influential innovators who often felt undervalued and unrecognised by existing structures and cultures. Often their work was highly respected externally but generally unknown to internal audiences outside of their own specific discipline areas.

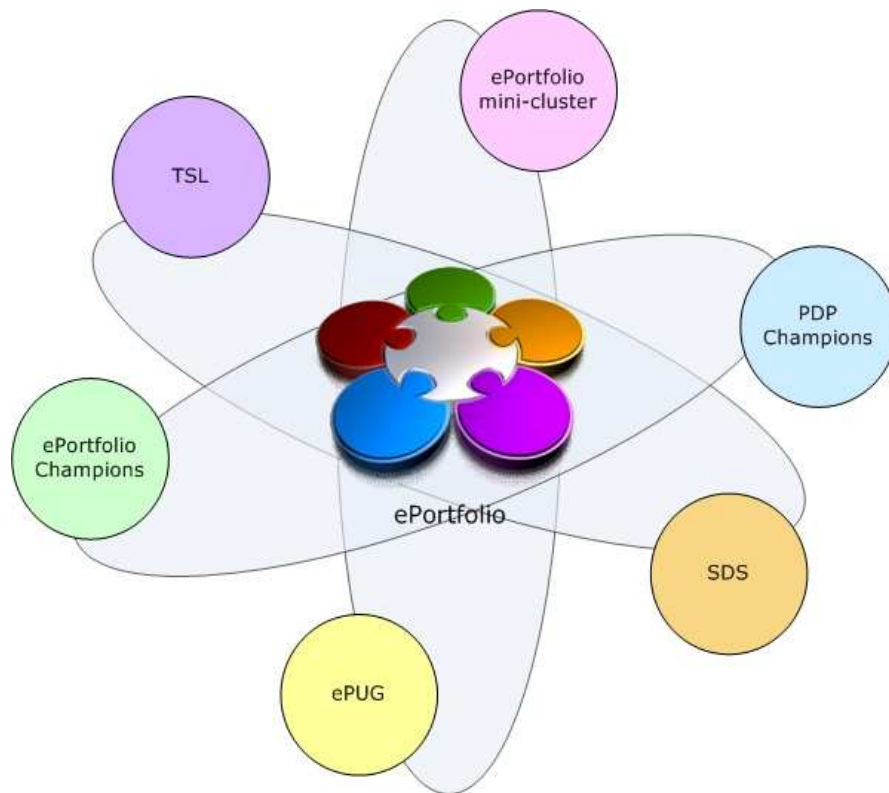


Figure 3 Emergent ePortfolio practices

Argyris and Schön (1996: 17) offer examples of,

“Near misses” - almost but not quite organizational learning [...] There are also cases in which individuals’ inquiry leads to both new understanding *and* action but remains outside the stream of distinctively organizational activity and produces no change in organizational theory-in-use; for example, an individual or small group becomes an underground champion of an innovation in organizational policy, technology, or practice”.

I see this description of a “near miss” as highly pertinent to ePUG and the ePortfolio mini-cluster.

After attending meetings of different satellites groups, I observed that there was no cohesive approach to learning and no equity of practice across the academic provision for students. This was also a view shared by my satellite participants, although membership of the different groups was often overlapping. In some cases one person’s view might be dominant. This can then be represented as the

group voice dependant on their identity within that group, e.g. Chair of the meeting.

1.4 My project approach and structure

My research centres on three key questions:

1. How can a central department develop an effective way of working with discipline-based teaching staff?
2. Is there a model for staff development that helps build staff capability and capacity?
3. How can this inform my work?

It is not my intention to go into any further detail here on these questions. However, they do provide work-based foci for my project which unlike a traditional PhD and as the module narrative for the Doctoral project (2004: 78) specifies should,

“... advance the interests of both the candidate and the candidate’s organisation or Professional area”.

When I first applied to Middlesex University to study for the Professional Doctorate, I had already completed one year of a PhD, but I found this an incredibly frustrating experience primarily as I wanted to act on my embryonic research. Once I had started at Middlesex I embarked on a very different research journey. In Figure 4: 17 I have identified what I believe were the key people, events and concepts that started me on this project. All these areas are discussed in detail in various chapters in my project. Briefly, my starting point was changing from being a PhD. candidate to becoming a practitioner/researcher coupled with ‘PDP’, my main work-based area. My initial thoughts about what I might do were based on my perceptions of the implementation of PDP within the taught curriculum. The concept of ‘PDP’ became more complex with the introduction of an ePortfolio system, PebblePad©. The mismatch between my assumptions relating to the capabilities and understanding of PDP and the capabilities possessed by different communities of practice highlighted by the introduction of PebblePad© led to me look at the notions of a ‘near miss’ for organisational learning, leading to my perceptions of what my organisations’

needs might be for educational development.



Figure 4 The who, what and why leading to this project

A key question for me personally was 'what would make a difference?'. To find this out I believed that I needed to use a methodology for my research that engaged all participants.

I am using Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) for this project, primarily as it supports research with and for people. Checkland and Scholes (1990: 281) suggest that there is a spectrum in the use of SSM that, at one end has a formal stage-by-stage application of the methodology (introduced in Figure 16: 75), which they define as Mode 1, to Mode 2 at the other end of the spectrum, as the internalisation and use of SSM as a "thinking mode". Checkland and Scholes (1990: 283) propose that the ideal type of Mode 2 enquiry,

"... takes SSM *itself* as its framework of ideas, takes as its methodology conscious reflection upon interactions with the flux of events and ideas, and takes as its focus of enquiry the process of learning one's way to purposeful improvement of problem situations".

This is how I have used SSM within my project. It is important to point out

before delving into my project further that throughout my project I have exploited visual imagery and the various 'tools' that are offered within SSM. In this document all the figures, tables and web resources are hyperlinked within the text. Where possible I have used colour to clarify or denote meaning – my apologies if you are viewing this as a black and white document as you will be missing some of the dynamics that colour gives to the images. Cousins (2009: 215) usefully points out that,

“Recent proponents of visual social science are arguing with increasing success, that there is no reason for visual data to take second place to the word”.

I agree completely with this view and it is a theme that I revisit further in my research. I have also used language in a way that has particular meaning in SSM such as 'cultural desirability', 'real world', 'systems world', 'accommodation' and so on. Where these terms have a SSM context, I have offered an explanation. Although I have tried to produce a lucid piece of prose, using Mode 2 SSM is not structured, neat or linear. SSM can be messy, flexible and 'looped' but ultimately gets one to a position of clarity. To describe the research process in a linear way therefore does not necessarily capture events as they happened in reality. To help the reader make sense of my research I have tried to structure the prose in such a way that it is easy to follow. If from reading my work anyone is thinking of using SSM, which I would whole-heartily recommend, then pulling out a linear text does not give a true picture of the research experience. To help clarify the structure of my project report I have drawn a concept map of the chapters, (Leshem and Trafford 2007: 99), highlighting the key influential writers, the SSM phases and key activities, (Figure 5: 24). There is an added complication in that within my doctoral project I was able to influence the design and delivery of an externally funded project – The Pathfinder Project - for which I was able to develop a conceptual model of developmental mentoring and test this model in a real world context. The Pathfinder Project is an entity in its own right but exists as the pivotal activity within my project. My doctoral project makes use of the Pathfinder Project but offers different insights, analyses and conclusions. The SSM phases do not progress one after another as the user may track-back with participants to find out more or further develop the conceptual model or discuss and debate issues to reach an accommodation.

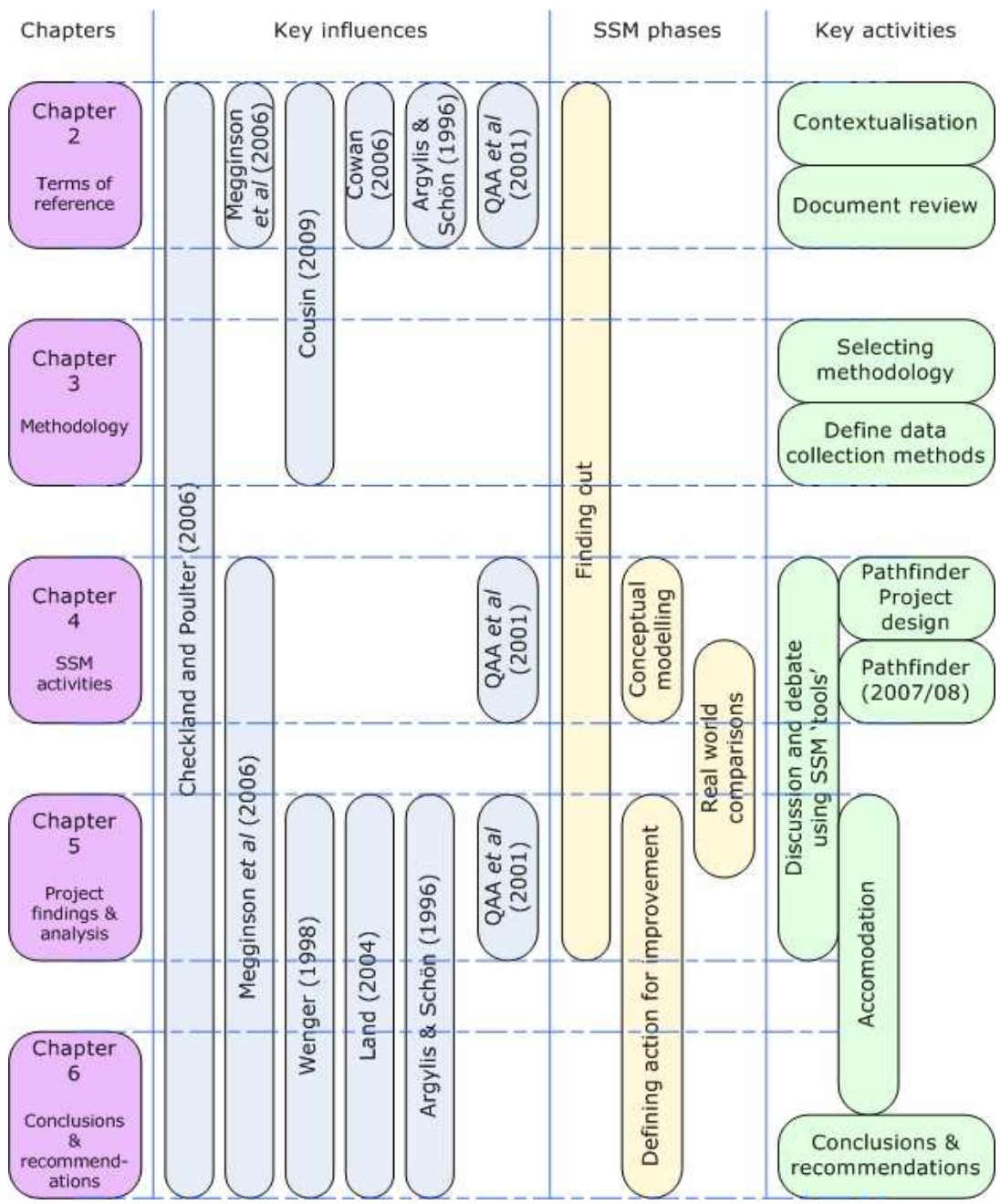


Figure 5 Concept map of chapters, influences, SSM phases and activities

Chapter 2 Terms of reference

Chapter 2, terms of reference, deals with my approach to my research, my position as a practitioner/researcher and looks at key influences in the early stages of my research design. In this chapter I start using phase 1 in SSM – finding out, to hone down my initial wide, messy and unstructured perceptions of the problematic situation. Chapter 2 includes a document and literature review that relates to phase 1 concentrating on key texts that help moved my thinking and research in the particular direction in which it has gone.

2.1 Research statement

This project investigates a complex situation related to educational development. I am using Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) to undertake this research. By doing so, I aim to have a better understanding of how a central department can work more effectively with discipline-based staff in our Academic Schools. It is they who are ultimately responsible for the learning and teaching experience of our students. As Checkland and Poulter (2006: XV) state,

“Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) is an organised way of tackling perceived problematic (social) situations. It is action-orientated. It organizes thinking about such situations so that action to bring about improvement can be taken”.

My work role as an educational developer and my lived experience provides the context for the project. My perceptions of a problematic situation come from observations and reflections of working within the taught curriculum with discipline-based colleagues. The subject around which my project evolves is personal development planning (PDP). All those involved in my project, including myself, are members of staff in a modern university who are actively offering or are planning to offer opportunities for students to engage in personal development activities. In addition, Checkland and Poulter (2006: XV) suggests that,

“The complexity of problematical situations in real life stems from the fact that not only are they never static, they also contain multiple interacting perceptions of ‘reality’. This comes about because different people have different taken-as-given (and often unexamined) assumptions about the world”.

This eloquently describes the problematic situation that I have found myself within throughout my project.

As my research journey developed I realised that I had adopted an interpretive, reflexive stance. Cousin (2010: 9) states that,

“With the growth of interpretivist frameworks across the social sciences and cultural anthropology (...), there was a strong acknowledgement that all researchers into human activities brought their own subjectivity to the research table”.

In keeping with my interpretive approach I have brought my own lived experiences to my research. I found this particularly relevant as a practitioner/researcher. In addition, I take on a role for change as Argyris and Schön (1996: 4) highlight,

“There must be an agent that deliberately seeks to improve performance and an intermediate process of deliberate thought and action (“trial and error”, for example) through which improvement is achieved”.

Rather than simple evolving through trial-and-error I see my research as being reflexive, one definition being (Schwandt 2007: 260),

“ ... reflexivity refers to the fact that all accounts (in speech and writing) are essentially not just *about* something but are also *doing* something. ... The term reflexivity is also used in a methodological sense to refer to the process of critical self-reflection on one’s biases, theoretical predispositions preferences and so forth”.

I position myself within the research as both the user of the research methodology that I have chosen, SSM, and as a practitioner/researcher within the context of my work-based environment.

Doucet and Mauthner (2002:134) state,

“We would argue that a wide and robust concept of reflexivity should include reflecting on and being accountable about personal, interpersonal, institutional, pragmatic, emotional, theoretical, epistemological and ontological influences on our research, and specifically about our data analysis processes.”

I am not a distant ‘spectator’ to my research (Argyris and Schön 1996: 5). My colleagues and I are partners within the research although this is not an equal partnership. I hold a dominant position as I decipher and construct meaning from the data-gathering activities. As Cousin (2010: 10) states,

“... the debate has shifted from minimizing subjectivity to thinking more about how to bring oneself into the research process through the notion of reflexivity and in the light of fresh understandings about language. These notions are informed by an acknowledgement that our knowledge of the world is mediated and interpreted from a particular stance and an available language, and that we should own up to this in explicit ways”.

As part of that shared language, I have also used a hermeneutic approach (Schwandt, 2007: 226) which recognises that cultural artefacts such as, rich pictures, ePortfolios and audio and video recordings can yield their own meanings. Both the methodology and the use of an ePortfolio system have generated very rich reflective accounts produced in a wide range of formats both image and text based. The shared views have equal consideration to my personal reflections. However I take on the role of interpreter and storyteller of the learning journey that I have undertaken whilst working with those who will ultimately offer PDP to students. I try to make sense of what happened in order to suggest appropriate and meaningful change within the remit of my central department. The research is collaborative, with those taking part - including myself - contributing to what the final messages to the key stakeholders should communicate. However, this is not a consensus view but an accommodation based on the concepts found within SSM of feasibility and desirability. Within the University of Wolverhampton the stakeholders are: The Institute for Learning Enhancement (ILE), senior managers, teaching staff and students. Within the HE sector the stakeholders are other HEIs via The Centre for Recording Achievement.

This research is not *on* or *about* the participants but *for* them (Denscombe 2002: 27-28). Reason and Heron, (1986) offer a model of research defined as cooperative experiential inquiry, that is also based on the concept of research that is *with* and *for* people rather than *on* them. I believe that this is an important distinction to make in my work-based context as I would want to see my research supporting both my employer and the people I work with, as well allowing me to examine my own role as a practitioner/researcher.

Reason and Heron (1986: 458) suggest three ways of knowing:

1. Propositional knowledge expressed in statements and theories
2. Experiential knowledge gained by experiencing something
3. Practical knowledge gained by doing something

My research includes elements of all three, though in different stages of my project one may be more prominent than the others. For example, Chapter 2 Terms of reference: 25 and, Chapter 3 Methodology: 61 mainly address propositional knowledge. Whereas, Chapter 4 SSM activities: 92, investigates experiential knowledge. Practical knowledge is tackled throughout my project by the use of SSM. The selection of the methodology, data collection and analysis tools all complement and reinforce collaboration. Clarifying the purpose of my research at the very beginning led me to reject certain routes which I may have gone down at the big, messy unstructured first stage of exploring my project under its working title of "who or what motivated engagement with PDP?".

When I presented my ideas at my project approval panel back in June 2006, I envisaged that my project would look at the implications of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of students. My reason being was that all student PDP activity that I had observed was tutor-driven as part of the taught curriculum; teacher-led PDP activity being formatively or summatively assessed as part of a taught module. The students are therefore either rewarded or punished for their efforts. Theories on the effects of extrinsic rewards on motivation argue that these rewards can create a short term, strategic and surface approach to the activity. Ryan and Deci (2000) talk of 'task contingent' rewards. In other words, one gains the reward if one completes the task. For a student this might be via credits and/or a grade for a module. Ryan and Deci (2000) argue that this can either be seen as coercion or bribery to get someone to do something that they would not do of their own accord. I found no group of students doing PDP of their own volition

that I could easily identify for my research. Furthermore, all staff involved in my initial interviews very clearly stated that unless students were assessed for their PDP activities then they would not happen. As part of the finding out stage of my project, I therefore changed the direction of my research from a focus on students to a focus on staff.

I was concerned from the start of this project that to work with students I would have to access these research participants via other peoples' classes as I do not teach my own cohort of undergraduate students. I have been very aware of sensitive and ethical issues had I wanted to approach the student body directly. The potential to cause damage to my working relationships was very much in the forefront of my mind. I was concerned that discipline-based colleagues might think that I was asking students to comment on the professional practice of their lecturers, the same members of staff who I wanted to motivate and work with me. I wanted my research to support my work-based environment and to ensure that no harm would befall those taking part, a theme discussed by Costley and Gibbs (2006). I am particularly aware that criticisms can and have been made of educational development departments similar to my own, that we are perceived to be in some sort of privileged position as we do not teach undergraduate students on a regular basis. Therefore, I feel that I have a duty of care to those in the face-to-face delivery of undergraduate learning and teaching.

My initial research proposal had the working title of, "Who or what motivates engagement with PDP?" After the first SSM stage of defining the problematic situation the emphasis of my work has moved from looking at learning and teaching experiences in the taught curriculum to the following:

1. How can a central department develop an effective way of working with discipline-based teaching staff?
2. Is there a model for staff development that helps build staff capability and capacity?
3. How can this inform my work?

The first stage of my research primarily involved those members of staff who were actively delivering PDP to undergraduate students. As outlined in my introduction, my reflection on a particular critical incident supporting a discipline-based colleague with their students became the catalyst for this project. My

perception of ILE is that we, as Bradley and Helm (2007: 10) state, aim to,

“... win over hearts and minds, moving away from a misconception of academic developers as the ‘thought police’”.

Therefore, discipline-based colleagues were also the critical friends and clients for my conceptual modelling. The testing and comparison of the conceptual model of using developmental mentoring was piloted as part of a Higher Education Academy externally funded Pathfinder Project “Embedding ePortfolio at Level 1” (2007-08) and is explored fully in section 4.3 Using the model for discussion and debate in the real world: 121 and section 5.1 Developmental mentoring with the Pathfinder Project: 138. I was the senior consultant on this project. In this role I led the design and delivery of the project activities, and jointly produced the evaluation reports and project deliverables. The aim of the Pathfinder Project was to extend the use of electronic personal development planning (ePDP) across all ten Academic Schools. This project ran for one academic year and included three residential retreats (two day, one overnight residential workshop that took place off university premises). As part of the evaluation team for the Pathfinder Project I was able to include specific questions for my Doctoral Project on the conceptual model when used in a real world setting, asking for views particularly on its desirability and feasibility. The responses to these questions and follow-up discussions form the basis for Chapter 5 Project findings and analysis: 138. From the evaluation of the Pathfinder Project and additional discussions undertaken directly for my Doctoral Project recommendations have been made in Chapter 6 Conclusion and recommendations: 192.

2.2 Document and literature review

The literature and documentation that I have used through the life of this project has changed as I have moved through the various phases within the SSM methodology. This document and literature review represents the numerous elements which influenced me at the start of my project, when the situation was large, messy and unstructured. To try to manage and structure my reading I created a mind map (Figure 6: 31). The mind map is split into four main branches: 1. What is PDP? (Orange), 2. Motivation, (Red), 3. Worker/researcher (Blue) and 4. Doctoral research skills (Green).

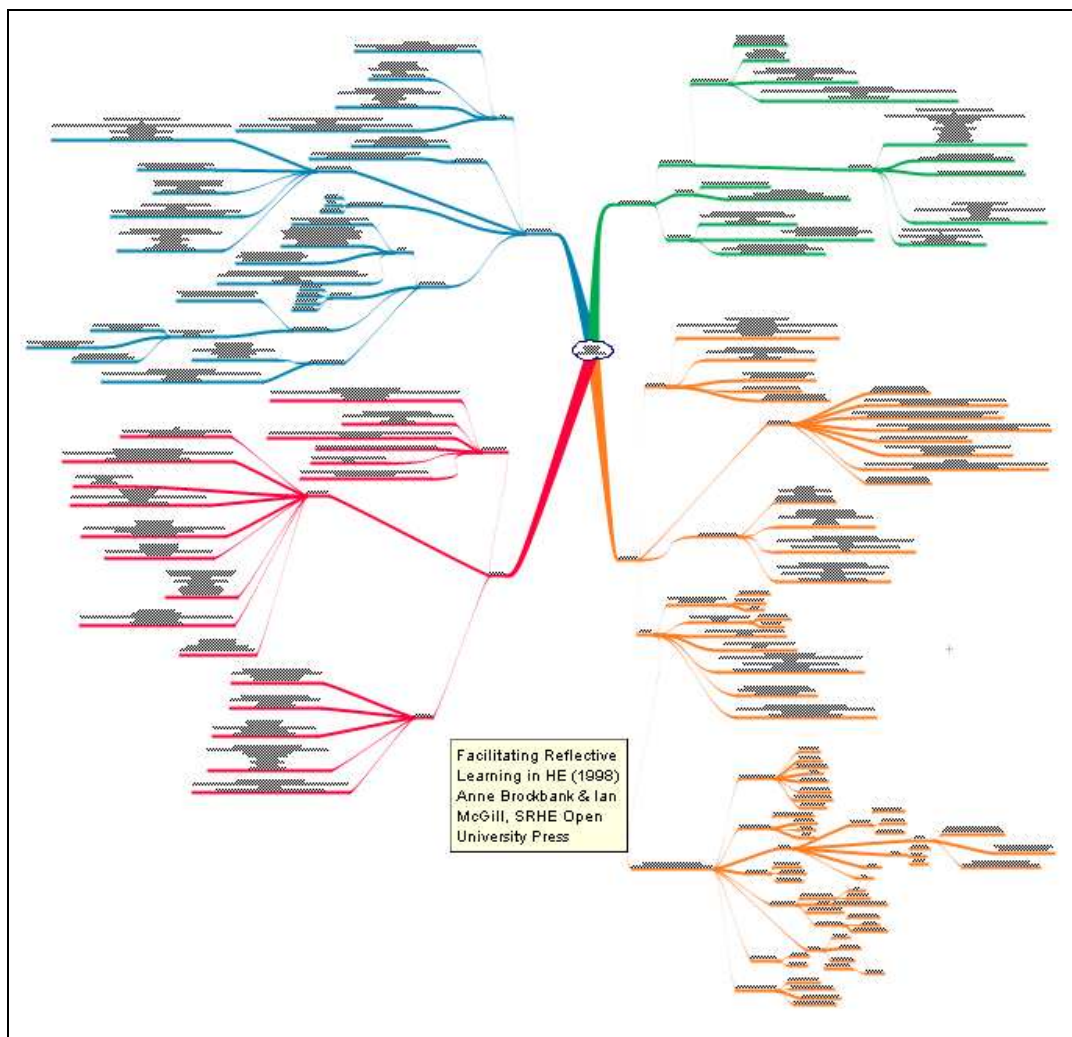


Figure 6 Screen grab of literature review mind map (2006)

These initial branches divided further into areas that seemed to me in the early stages of my research to have some connectivity with one of the four 'themes'.

The four themes reflected some of the duality that I found myself needing to deal with as a practitioner/researcher. The first two areas were looking at literature that might support my study 'topic' and the other two, my new identity as a Doctoral student on a work-based programme. As the problematic situation became more defined some of the original areas became less relevant and were dropped. For example, I thought that I would be investigating intrinsic and extrinsic motivation but as my research developed, this area became much less relevant and mentoring more so. However, as I read more on reflection this informed both my practitioner/researcher knowledge and that of my 'topic'. Other key writers influenced the production of my project report such as, Trafford and Leshem (2008) and Cousin (2009).

Initially honing down the literature review was difficult as Figure 6: 31 demonstrates. However, it is in the nature of Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) that this constant redefining occurs as one progresses. I found that as I moved through from the finding out stage towards defining action for improvement, key writers emerged that were not in my repertoire in this early document review. For example, the work of Trowler (1989), Wenger (1998) and Land (2004) have been very influential within Chapter 5: 138.

For the initial finding out stage of my project, my literature review covered four key areas. They were ranked in order of the influence that I perceived they had on the early stage of my project:

1. Sector-wide and local policy documents, sector-wide guidelines, national and local strategies,
2. PDP, CPD and reflection,
3. Mentoring
4. Organisational learning

This ranking reflects to a certain extent, how I might approach my working environment. For example, areas 1 and 2 reflect more of my own work experience; taking policy and helping to implement and embed it into practice. National and local strategies, such as the policy statement, guidelines and implementation for PDP from the QAA *et al* (2000, 2001, 2009), and my University's Learning and Teaching Strategies (2002-005, 2006-10) would provide the national and local context and direction for my work. The interpretation of these documents and their implementation is where my role

would fit into my organisational structure. I would then work with discipline-based staff who contextualise and translate theoretical 'models' into practice within the student experience. This is a two-way function as in my capacity of institutional representative to CRA and as part of ILE, I am able to feedback the student experience, discipline-based practice and implementation issues into the process that reviews and devises present and future national policy and practice. Areas 3 and 4 reflect the literature used as I developed my conceptual models and explored a comparison between that concept and the actual work-based experience of both my colleagues and myself.

I have been conscious of a synergy and flow between the topic of my research and the research process that I have being going through. To help organise my thinking I created conceptual maps (Figure 7: 33).

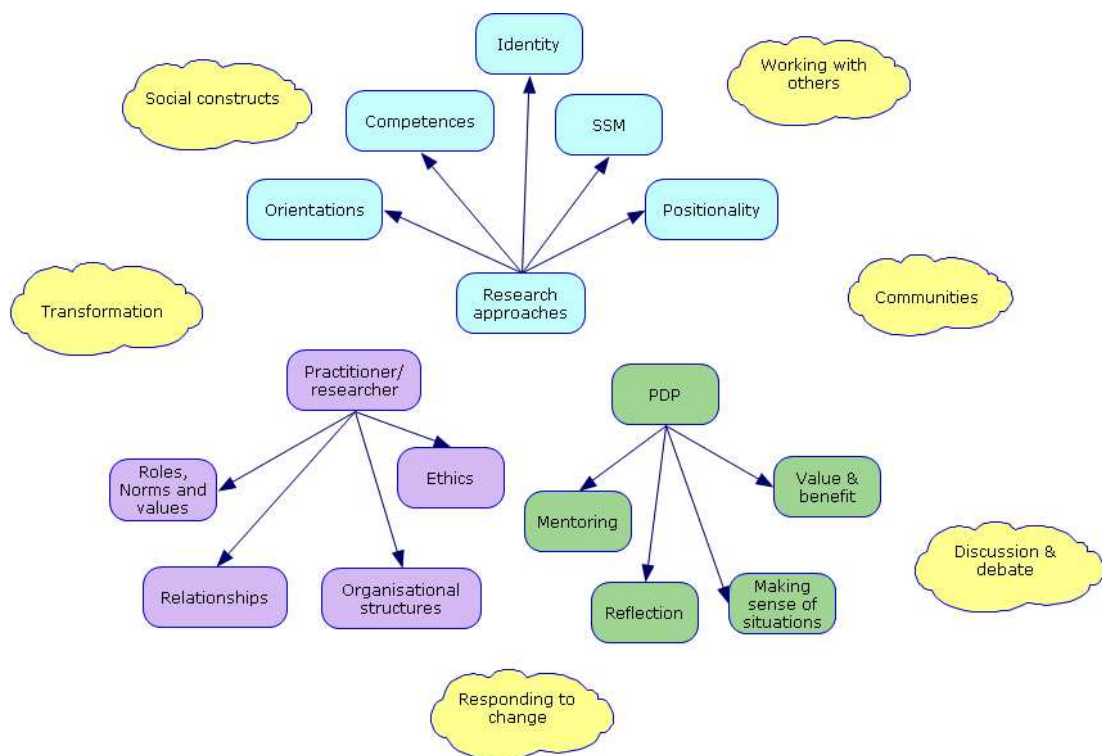


Figure 7 Synergy and flow from and between themes and ideas

For example, topics relevant to PDP were in green, issues relating to work-based learning in blue and my approaches to the research, in purple. Also included, were themes and ideas that I felt were 'floating around' these issues but were, as yet, not well formed enough to influence my thinking in the early stages of my research. During my early literature review I often read things that had a

resonance for my research subject, my professional and personal life and for my studies. For example, Checkland and Poulter (2006: 61) revisit the seven principles and five actions of SSM stating,

“The *inquiry* created by principles (1) and (5) is in principle a *never-ending process of learning*. It is never-ending since taking action to improve the situation will change its characteristics. It becomes a new (less problematical) situation and the process in (3), (4) and (5) could begin again. Learning is never finished!”.

Acknowledging the never-ending process of learning, the changing characteristics of my project, work environment and my journey as a practitioner/researcher has felt sometimes as though writing my project report is like mapping shifting sands; each day something changes and a new view emerges.

2.2.1 National and local strategies and context

In May 2000 the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) *et al* issued a policy statement on the development of a Progress File for Higher Education. This policy statement came from recommendations within the *National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education* more commonly referred to as the Dearing Report (1997). Recommendation 20 of this report suggests that there should be a way to develop a progress file with two elements:

“a transcript recording student achievement which should follow a common format devised by institutions collectively through their representative bodies;

a means by which students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development.”

All Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) were invited to endorse and implement this policy. The Policy Statement set out roles and responsibilities for implementation, (point 16 in the Guidelines for HE Progress files) which clearly state that institutions are responsible for providing opportunities for students to engage with personal development planning. It makes clear that the

responsibility for gaining benefit from this process would be with the student but that the institutional stance, policies, support and attitudes would influence this engagement. The Guidelines appear to suggest an implementation date of the start of the academic year 2005/6. It was perceived that from this date the QAA could include PDP opportunities in their institutional audit.

The definition of PDP found within the QAA *et al* documentation (2000, 2001, 2009), (see Glossary of terms and acronyms: 4) is now widely used across the sector. Prior to the Dearing Report (1997) and then the QAA *et al* Policy statement (2000), PDP was not a term that had a generally understood meaning within HE in the United Kingdom. I would argue that without the policy statement and guidelines, particularly the perceived implementation date, then there would have been no national agenda or drive for PDP. What is open to interpretation within these documents is how PDP opportunities were to be offered by institutions to their students. In an attempt to have a national debate and a common shared language there have been various attempts focused through the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA), to have a cross-sector (including 14-19, HE and employers) educational understanding of PDP.

Grant and Richardson (2005) produced a report titled, "What do we mean by PDP?" The report tried to establish what activities might represent PDP, (Appendix 1: 219) for example:

- Reviewing strengths and weaknesses (generic/subject specific)
- Stating and reviewing goals (short term/long term)
- Making plans to achieve goals/remedy areas of weakness
- Recording experiences, reflecting on what has been learned
- Recording achievements, reflecting on progress

The output of these activities could generate evidence or personal development records (PDR), these might include:

- Initial statement of motivation for the programme of study
- Review of a period of time
- Analysis of feedback received
- Critical incident analysis
- Reflective learning logs
- Action plans

These areas were further developed into activity groups (Ward 2007) and as activity processes (Ward *et al* 2007). What I have observed is that by defining these activities they can become the domain of the teacher as well as than the learner. This could be expected if the motivation for PDP comes via policy documents etc. with measurable outcomes for an institution. Defining PDP can help to identify what activities are going on within the curriculum but cannot judge the depth, value and benefit of the learner engagement.

Peters (2004) argues strongly that PDP is a process rather than a product. The product, in the form of a PDR or portfolio, provides concrete evidence of attained goals set by personal development planning. He argues that the establishment of the process must come first and is more important than the production of the record. In my own institution, we agreed with Peters' view. We established a University framework – PACE (Figure 8: 36) for the process of embedding PDP within the taught curriculum (explained in more detail in section 2.2.2 Local interpretation of PDP at the University of Wolverhampton: 37).

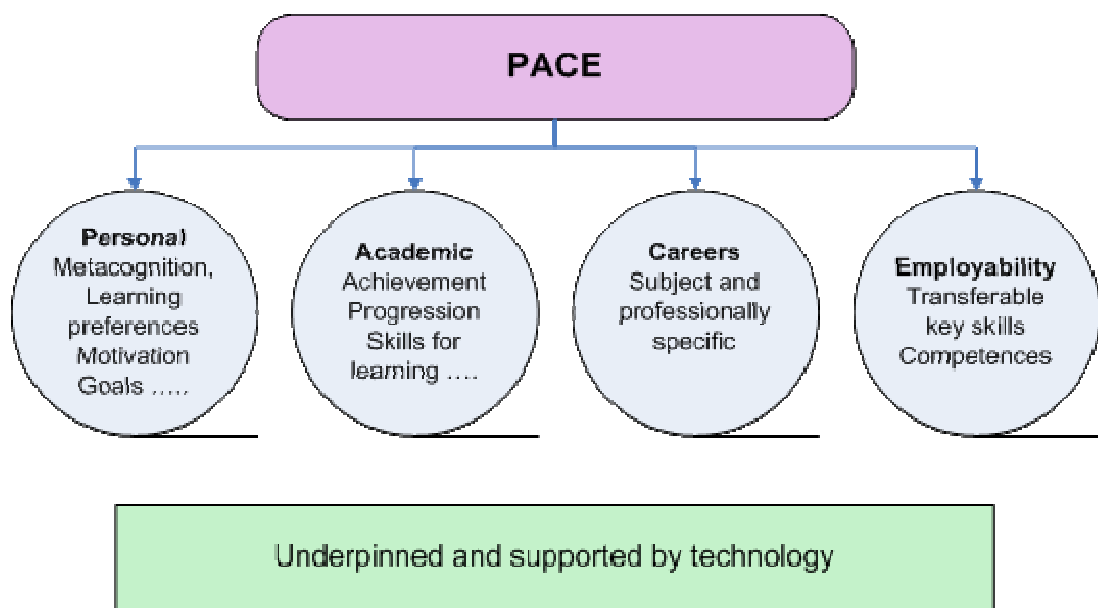


Figure 8 PACE: a formative student-centred process

After the process was established, we provided an institutional tool, in our case, an ePortfolio system. Any 'product' created by the process would be owned by the student. In practical terms, that has meant that students might undertake any number of PDP activities that help them reflect on their work and they may or may not be asked to present those thoughts in some form of evidence for

assessment. In a number of cases, various elements have been 'stitched together' to create an ePortfolio. The pedagogy for an evidenced-based ePortfolio has drawn heavily on the concept of 'Patchwork Text' (Winter 2003). Students might never be asked to present one finished ePortfolio of evidence but they might have used a number of functions of the ePortfolio system to help them with the process of PDP. Students, in fact, would be encouraged not to think of PDP as producing one finished product, rather that they should tailor-make any evidence to fit their particular needs.

Following on from the QAA *et al* "Personal development planning: guidance for institutional policy and practice in Higher Education" 2009, an addition a link between the concept of a HE Progress File and the proposed Higher Education Achievement Reports (HEARs) has now been made (CRA). At present it is envisaged that the HEAR would distinguish between accredited and certificated learning, (which might sit outside of the taught curriculum), that the university would be prepared to verify, and PDP. It is envisaged that the HEAR document would primarily be used by students to write applications, employers to be able to have a fuller picture of a students' experience and HEI's themselves.

2.2.2 Local interpretation of PDP at the University of Wolverhampton

The issue between process and product is very pertinent to this project as different worldviews and perceptions of some key stakeholders have frequently been based on whether the development and use of a piece of software, an ePortfolio 'tool' which generates a product, is more important than the process that it should be supporting.

At the start of this project PDP was strategically placed within the Institution's Learning and Teaching Strategies 2002-05, 2005-06 and 2006-10. These strategies are highly significant to my project as they provide the context and rationale for my role and that of the school teams within the Learning and Teaching Holon (Figure 2: 18). These documents provide a central dialogue between my department and the Academic Schools. They also are monitored and evaluated through the University Quality Enhancement Committee (UQEC) whose minutes go to our Academic Board, which in turn go to the Board of Governors.

Within what was at the time the Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) (2002-08) senior members of staff were appointed as 'Co-ordinators'. Each Co-ordinator held a responsibility for a different priority within the Learning and Teaching Strategy. Each CELT Co-ordinator worked across all Academic Schools with similar School-based Co-ordinators. Each CELT co-ordinator chaired cross-School committees based on learning and teaching objectives and reported back to various university committees on behalf of their School Co-ordinators. I was responsible for the student-focused objectives that included progress files and PDP. For example, sector documentation such as, *The Guidelines for HE Progress Files (QAA et al 2001)*, were received by the University Executive. The relevant Pro-Vice Chancellor allocated this to a committee, UQEC and department, ILE. We then assigned this to the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2002-05 for development and implementation via the Strategy's Student Priority and objectives. The Academic Schools then wrote their own targets and action plans for these objectives. The School plans were then reviewed annually in the School and University Quality Enhancement Committees. The School action plans and targets were overseen by the School Co-ordinators but implemented by teaching staff. School-based SDS Co-ordinators led the PDP initiatives.

An outcome of the strategic development of PDP was the creation of a written and visualised institutional framework (Lawton, 2003). The framework re-defined PDP – personal development planning to - PACE – personal, academic, careers and employability planning and development (Figure 8: 36). This was done in order to reflect more closely the activities and outcomes that the institution wished students to achieve (Lawton, 2003). PACE set out a framework establishing a formative student-centred process that should provide a product documenting a student's record of achievement and experience at the university. This process would be a developmental one, used by students with tutor guidance. PACE processes were to be integrated throughout the whole of the student experience at the university with different emphases at different stages of a student's experience. The PebblePad© software was developed to provide an institution-wide tool to support this process. At level 1 the emphasis could be on students' personal and academic development in particular helping them to orientate themselves to the institution, their school and the expectations of their chosen discipline(s). At level 2 the emphasis could be on transferable employability skills and at level 3 helping students articulate what they had learnt in HE for particular career paths. The level 3 activities could provide a showcase 'product' for the student to present to future education establishments

or employers. Within the University's revised strategic plan (2008-12) this area now falls under the concept of 'Graduate Attributes'. I am now leading this initiative.

My project is set in the post-implementation phase of PDP and links directly to the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy 2006-10 which aims to,

"... embed the quality, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of our learning environments into the mainstream processes and procedures of university planning and implementation, so as to enhance the lives, the educational experience and employability of our students".

2.2.3 The emergence of ePortfolios

At the start of my project in the UK there were no commercially available PDP electronic systems for higher education. There were a few purpose built systems such as LUCID – University of Liverpool and PADSHE – University of Nottingham these tended to be for medical and health related courses. At my University it was decided for both practical and pedagogical reasons that to provide a paper-based system for students to record PDP would be inefficient. It would go against the institutional ethos of using technology to support learning. As a consequence of this an investment was made to develop an electronic tool – PebblePad©. This is now a commercially available piece of software. At the start of the academic year 2005/6 this tool was made available to all staff and students across the whole of the University. My role was changed to include the development of pedagogies for the use of electronic personal development planning (ePDP).

The concept of our ePortfolio system is:

"A system which allows users, in any of their learning identities, to selectively record any abilities, events, plans or thoughts that are personally significant; it allows these records to be linked, augmented or evidenced by other data sources and allows the user to integrate institutional data with their personal data

It facilitates self-awareness, promotes reflection, supports enrichment through commentary and feedback from the recipients of shared assets. It grows, develops and matures as the user accesses it, without constraint, over time. It provides tools for aggregating assets in multiple forms; for telling myriad stories to diverse audiences and ensures absolute user-control over what is shared, with whom, for what purpose and for how long

It is a personal repository; a personal journal; a feedback and collaboration system; and a digital theatre - where the audience is by invitation only”.

What is an ePortfolio? www.wlv.ac.uk/eportfolio 2009

In June 2007 a review of PDP at level 1 showed that all academic schools were using PebblePad© in some way to deliver PDP in the undergraduate curriculum. At a PebblePad© ‘Super User Group’ meeting (December 2008), the University of Wolverhampton was one of 10 institutions present who had been categorised as ‘super users’ by the product developers, Pebble Learning. In terms of usage, we had an extensive lead on the closest other institutional user of PebblePad©. To put this market lead into context and perspective, at the time of the meeting, the University of Wolverhampton had 19,000 active users and the closest usage from another institution 3,000 active users. An unintended outcome of this development has been a substantial number of externally funded projects and initiatives in which I have been involved as either a senior member or advisor to the project teams, (see Appendix 6: 230). The culmination of all this work was that in May 2010, my University beat international competition to win one of two global Platinum Awards. The Instructional Management Systems (IMS) Learning Impact Awards had a shortlist drawn from educational institutions across the world.

“The *Learning Impact Awards* are designed to recognize the most impactful use of technology worldwide in support of learning”.

Our submission focused on the use of (ePDP) in its curriculum, demonstrating how this has made a difference to the success and achievement of students.

In 2008, a Blended Learning Strategy (2008-11) was devised as an amendment to the Learning and Teaching Strategy (2006-10). The Blended Learning Strategy (2008-11) is written in terms of student entitlements. One of those entitlements states that,

“... all students should have the opportunity to engage with electronic personal development planning (ePDP)”.

The development of the Blended Learning Strategy (2008-11) was influenced by the HEFCE's Strategy for e-Learning (2005: 6). Strand 3 Student support, progression and collaboration, states the following objective:

“Objective 3.4 Encourage e-based systems of describing learning achievement and personal development planning (PDP)”.

This objective clearly moves the process of PDP into something that is evidenced via an electronic format. During the period of my research, electronic personal development planning (ePDP) and PDP have become largely interchangeable terms. The emergent ePortfolio initiatives demonstrate a shift in funding and therefore power away from quality audit and general learning and teaching initiatives. This 'power' I view as emerging from the impact of external funding. At the time of writing, one of the main sources of external income to the HE sector is via the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). This shift of funding has increased the attractiveness of ePDP as opposed to PDP by its use of an electronic system. This situation is mirrored in my own work experience, for example in the present economic climate (2009 – 2010) any research and development initiatives that do not meet immediate needs of the institution, (blended learning supporting retention, achievement and progression), can only be externally funded.

2.2.4 Personal interpretation of the local situation

In my project proposal (July 2006) I draw a picture examining the influences, systems and groups that I thought affected and motivated me (Figure 8: 42). This picture I split into two differing worlds, that of my day-to-day role within the University and the other the other external influences that I perceived as having

some effect on that day-to-day world.

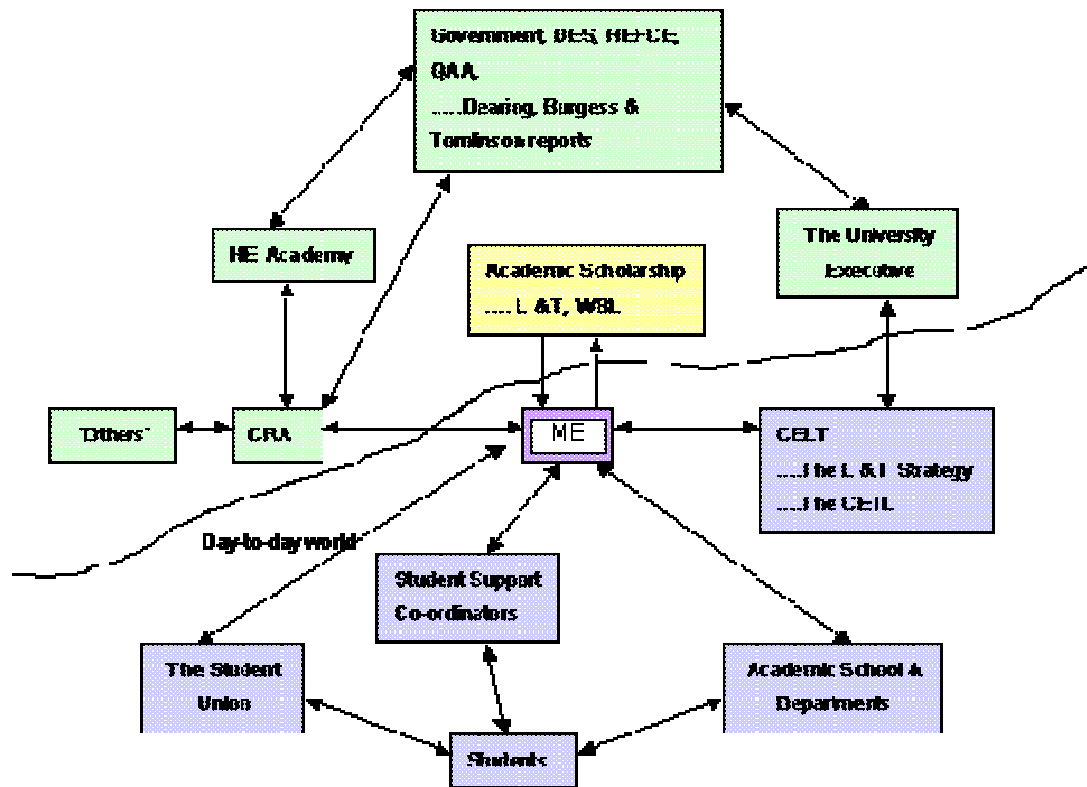


Figure 9 The image used in DPS4515

This original picture I found inadequate and unsatisfactory as I felt that the text and boxes did not show the dynamics between the various elements or the importance that I gave to each. It felt too clinical. I redrew this picture (Figure 10: 43) adding more of my perceptions into the picture including visual representations that I thought reflected more of the essence of the relationships. For example, the sector I represented as something solid, classical and distant to my work experience. I saw the Executive as managerial, and something that I was in the service of, however I saw the CRA as more collegial and friendly. In my day-to-day work the biggest group of people who influenced my work were the SDS Co-ordinators. I presented this image to both colleagues in my own university and to colleagues from other universities at a CRA residential seminar. Interestingly everyone started to place themselves either into my image or to empathise with what I had identified. Some offered their own versions of my image based on their perceptions of their work environment. I redrew this picture a number of times throughout my project.

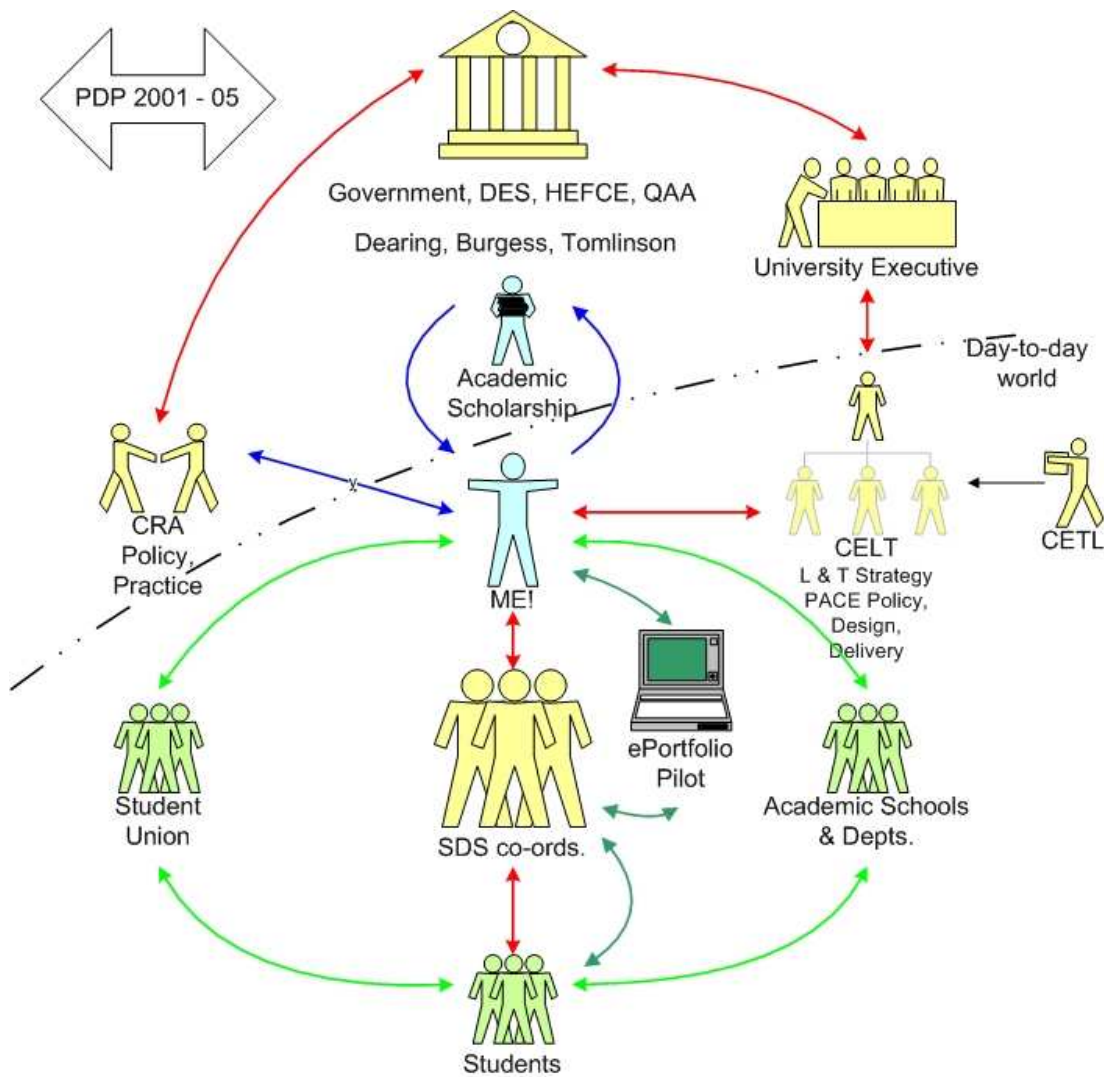


Figure 10 My perceptions of my work influences (July 2006)

In 2006 I drew an image predicting where I might be by 2010 (Figure 11: 44).

I identified that ePortfolios would provide a gateway into the academic schools and departments. Also that the relationship with the schools would grow and the one with the SDS co-ordinator would diminish. I anticipated a stronger relationship with students via the schools than through the SDS co-ordinator. I thought that there would be more influences apparent to and from 'others' as yet unidentified. I also believed that the HEA and the CRA as its associate member would have a direct influence on national policy and practice. I did not predict that JISC would play a major role. However, they have been one of the key stakeholders which allowed ePDP practice to flourish. Again a number of colleagues both internally and externally saw these drawings; they placed themselves in the structure that I had conceived, discussing how they

interpreted my view. For me, this has shown how powerfully a well-drawn and attractive image can reflect a situation that would be difficult to put into words. I noticed that people could and did comment on perceptions of power and influence particularly if I gave a greater size of one image to another.

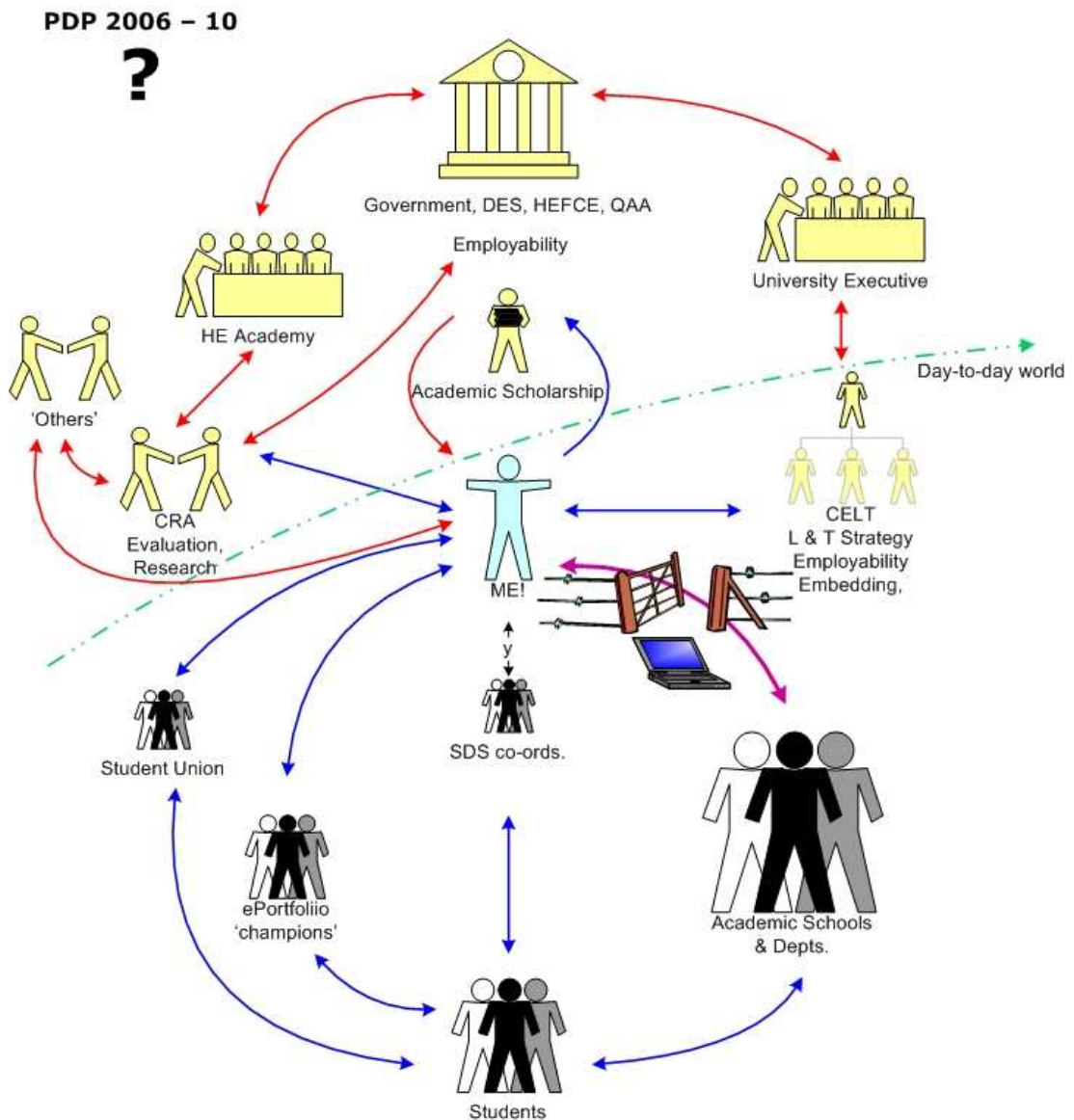


Figure 11 A prediction for 2010

As a senior member of several external projects I have presented widely to both national and international audiences. This has given me a professional credibility within the field of ePDP. I work closely with a colleague who also has a national and international profile and as such we have a certain external authority. This is less apparent within our internal structures which are hierarchical. Nothing seems to get done unless it goes via a committee. Accessing university committees is not something that is easy to do unless invited to speak on an

institutional priority. This is not to say that things cannot be changed, but that one must know how to access the relevant systems. One way I found that is relevant to my project is by being the institutional link between the external stakeholders and an internal audience with a key role of synthesizing information and suggesting how this might impact on my institution. An example of this would be the proposed implementation of Higher Education Achievement Reports (HEAR's).

2.2.5 Local staff development issues

All of the strategic documents related to PDP created a sector-wide and institutional emphasis that raised the profile and priority of PDP processes and activities. In my University, this required discipline-based staff to offer students ways of engaging with PDP in the taught curriculum. For many staff their initial perception was that this was something new and in addition to what was already happening in the curriculum; the work of Grant and Richardson (2005) and Ward, (2007) became important in providing exemplars of the kinds of activities that were valid for PDP. While academic staff were reasonably comfortable with PDP, with the introduction of the PebblePad© itself, new skills were required. Initially, these were seen as solely software skills but as my project identified these were less important than understanding the pedagogy of ePortfolio-based learning. The opportunities offered to discipline-based staff to develop the skills to engage students with PDP in the taught curriculum were not available at the start of my project as we did not yet have a clear understanding of what was needed. There was also no strategic drive for ePDP until the Blended Learning Strategy (2008-11) emerged.

Initially I did not envisage that my work would be about staff personal and professional development. In the University, there is no formal process for staff PDP; there are CPD opportunities but these are not recorded within any institutional process. 'Training' requirements are recorded as part of the annual appraisal process but these are generally not reflected on. In the QAA *et al* guidelines (2001: 47) it states that,

“Students are more likely to value PDP if they see that academic staff themselves are involved in PDP processes”.

2.2.6 PDP, CPD and reflection

I have observed by attending a number of CRA National Residential Seminars over the past 5 years that the value and benefit of PDP has been somewhat taken as a given by the majority of the HE sector. I believe that this is driven by the national policy statement and guidelines. There is some questioning of evidence that PDP improves student learning, (EPPI, 2003 and Jackson *et al* 2004), but these studies are prior to the sector-wide implementation date of 2005/06. Sector evidence, evaluation and research around 2005/06 have been primarily focused towards the achievement of policy and development of practice (Ward, Jackson, Strivens 2005) for the student experience.

Jackson *et al* (2004) states that, PDP is proxy for a number of constructs which attempt to connect and draw benefit from reflection, recording and action-planning. Key to the start of the PDP process is therefore reflection and from that reflection the taking of some sort of action. Definitions and descriptions of PDP and CPD all mention reflection as one element within both processes. Many different people have modelled the process of reflection as a cycle. For example, Gibbs (1988) is a well-used model (Figure 12: 46) in learning and teaching. However useful this model is I believe that it is limited by its cyclical nature. The Gibbs model gives a framework for retrospective thought and future planning but not necessarily for further action.

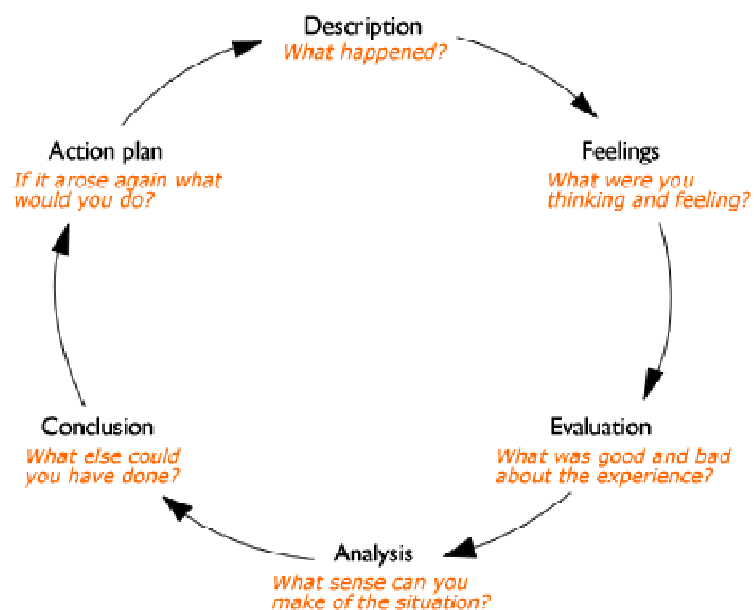


Figure 12 Gibbs, G. (1988) Reflective cycle

Reflection by oneself at a particular moment when an event happens is defined by Schön (1987: 26) as reflection-in-action (thinking on your feet), though this reflection might be prompted by the questioning of others (Cowan 2006: 51). Reflection post-event for a deliberate purpose is defined by Schön (1987: 26) as reflection-on-action (retrospective). However, Cowan (2006: 52) adds a third form of reflection, reflection-for-action.

This is defined as,

“... reflection which establishes goals for subsequent learning or development, by identifying the needs, aspirations and objectives which will subsequently be prominent in the learner’s mind”.

Cowan developed a number of models for experiential and reflective learning and teaching, some original (Figure 13: 47) and others developing existing models (Figure 14: 49). I found the work of Cowan very powerful.

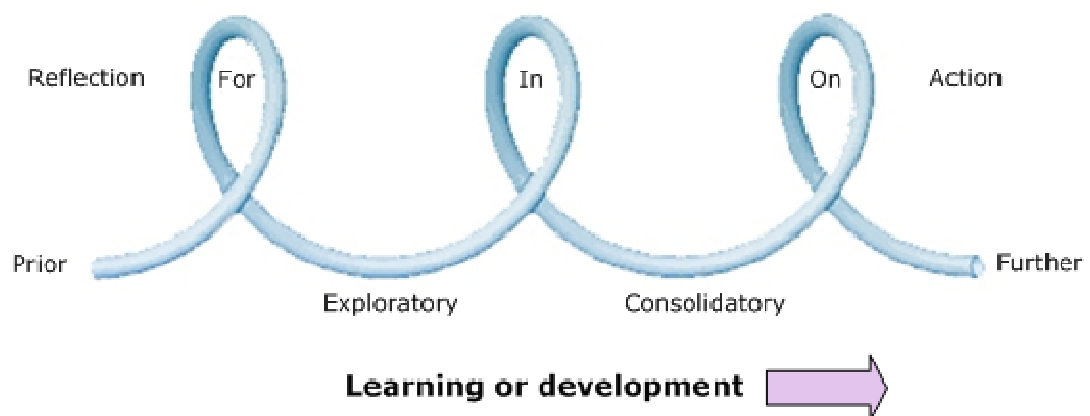


Figure 13 The Cowan diagram (2006: 53)

Firstly, it appeals to my visual learning preferences. Secondly, it places an emphasis on reflection as a continual process that moves forward, loops and spirals, rather than being confined to what can be seen as a closed cycle. Thirdly, it draws attention to reflection based on previous experience and observation in order to predict and plan for future action. In my project I used this ability to conduct a risk analysis exercise that was revisited over a period of time to great success. Elements of Cowan’s model such as the visual modelling and movement through a continual process influenced my choice of research

methodology. There is a synergy between SSM and the Cowan model as both have a similar trajectory starting with prior knowledge moving through an exploratory stage towards consolidation.

The different 'types' of reflection have influenced my thinking in relation to the nature of previous CPD activities provided by my department. For example we have run a number of staff development eLearning 'retreats' (two day, one night total immersion training sessions) for teaching staff. The initial evaluation of these retreats showed that people are very keen to put into place what they have learnt. However, follow-up questionnaires showed that there is frequently a rapid fading of both confidence and technical ability. Staff commented that when they went back their normal day-to-day activities, (mainly teaching and related administration), there was little or no time to reflect-on-action. When reflection did take place this focused on negative aspects, e.g. what went wrong? Once back in the real world and due in part to a modular scheme at the University, primarily teaching and reflection tends to happen in isolation. At the retreats the following comments were made,

"I can really see how using the ePortfolio could help my students"

"It's much easier than I thought to create a template"

However, once away from the staff development events the comments changed to,

"I'd love to use something like an ePortfolio but, I don't have the time to develop the materials I want to use"

"I felt confident at the retreat but, I haven't touched the system since I got back".

I was intrigued by Cowan's development of Kolb's model of experiential learning, in which Cowan paraphrases Kolb's text (2006: 49). Cowan questions a perception, by the way that Kolb's cycle is drawn (Figure 14: 49), that learning starts at the top of the cycle as a concrete experience and moves clock-wise through a logical sequence.

When discussing the tutor's role in the Kolb cycle Cowan uses the term 'facilitative teacher' (2006: 47),

"He [the student] was being taken purposefully round the cycle [the Kolb cycle] by following structured activities devised by his facilitative teacher".

I dislike the concept of a teacher being a 'facilitator'. I see the teacher in this role as being a passive outsider to the learning experience. I believe both teacher and learner should experience mutual growth, which is not a passive process. To transfer this to my own situation as a member of a central staff development department, if others see me as just a 'facilitator' then I become an outsider to the learning experience. This could reinforce views of elitism and not belonging to the 'real world' of teaching and learning. I know the theory but not the practice.

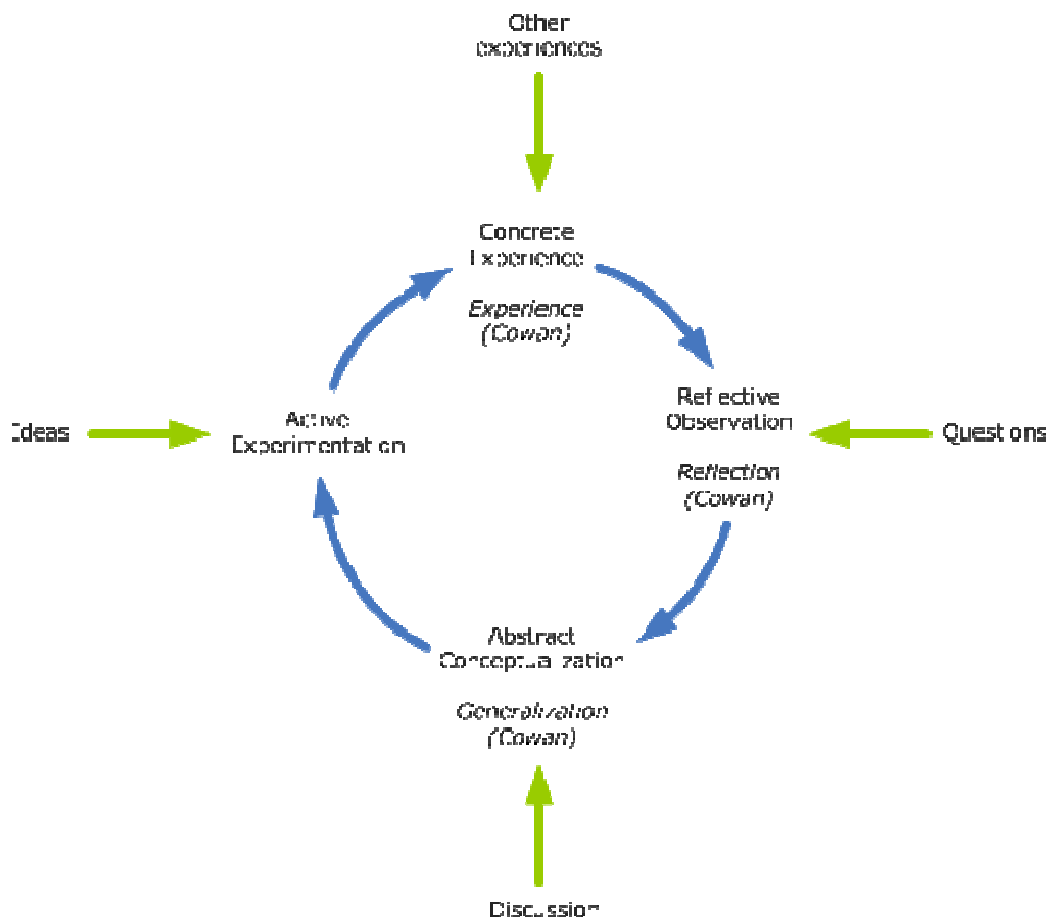


Figure 14 The Kolb cycle for socio-constructivist learning in Cowan

Cowan (2006: 100) offers a definition of 'teaching' that I would see as relevant within my project,

"I take 'teaching' to be: the purposeful creation of situations from which motivated learners should not be able to escape without learning or developing. I put considerable stress in that definition on the word 'purposeful'. It is the existence of a purpose, and the pursuit of it, which for me distinguish education as a process from other situations in which valuable learning occurs. Education, for me, is a process which involves and uses teachers, and hence is distinct from the natural (and valuable) learning or development which will often happen incidentally or accidentally, yet is totally tutorless and learner-directed".

He also sees, and hopes for (2006: 100),

"... the real possibility of an active, and even proactive role for the facilitative teacher".

I am perhaps being too critical of the notion of 'facilitation' as it is a term that Brockbank and McGill (1998: 145-165) use to differentiate between teaching as transmission of knowledge – 'I teach, you listen' and something that gives ownership of the learning process to the students. In this context the teacher is the facilitator but to me this still implies that the facilitative teacher learns nothing through the process.

Cowan (2006: 100-117) offers examples of 'Facilitation through tutor intervention' where he sees the tutor in this process as the driver of the learner (2006: 107),

"... tutors have a crucial role, by being proactive in nudging or coercing the student into or around the various stages of the Kolb cycle. This amounts to intervention during the activity, to accelerate movement by the learners through what Vygotsky (1978) called the zone of proximal development (ZPD), where something you can do 'today' with the promoting of somebody more experienced than you can become something which you will be able to do on your own 'tomorrow'".

What is outlined here for me, has a resonance with mentoring, however this 'action' is based *on* the learner rather than *with* the learner. Jackson *et al* (2004) maintain that PDP encourages learners to plan their own learning, to act on their plans, to evaluate their learning and to generate evidence of learning. The majority of literature concerning PDP uses the term 'learners' and whilst this is generally interpreted as meaning students, particularly undergraduates, the concepts are wholly transferable to members of staff as learners. For staff, the terminology often changes to continuing professional development (CPD) rather than PDP. CPD is defined as "a process by which individuals take control of their own learning and development, by engaging in an on-going process of reflection and action" (Megginson and Whittaker 2003). The processes of reflection, PDP and CPD as defined by Jackson *et al* (2004) and Megginson and Whittaker (2003) highlight the individual nature of each process. They do not articulate learning as a social activity undertaken with others. I would argue that this is a misconception, particularly when the process of PDP has an outcome which provides evidence for a third party. PDP/CPD is no longer just a process that an individual goes through but is shared with another to show the value and benefit gained.

Literature relating to reflection supports the notion of reflection as a social construct. Brockbank and McGill (1998: 58) emphasize the danger of self-deception if reflection is carried out in isolation and this is also relevant for PDP. If learning, reflection and PDP are social constructions that include our lived experiences then dialogue and interaction with others are key activities for these processes. This has influenced me greatly as I feel that my central role is one that should encourage interaction between my department and discipline-based teachers. The challenge is finding a model that encourages mutual growth and respect.

I have identified the following points in order to draw together key aspects of different theoretical frameworks as characteristics of what I aim to achieve within my project:

- A way of developing a spiral approach to reflection for, in and on action
- A process that encourages reflection with others
- A process that aims for mutual growth
- A process that sees all members as active participants
- A learning experience which is driven and owned by the 'learner' with

guidance from the 'teacher'

- Learning activities which assist development for all contributors

2.2.7 Educational development and a role for mentoring

In my project I am using the term, 'Educational development' rather than 'Academic development' though I perceive them as interchangeable terms. The starting point for trying to find a model for mutual growth is one of potential conflict between two 'tribes' (Bath and Smith 2004), the discipline-based academics and educational developers. I have been a discipline-based academic and would argue that I still am. My current discipline is learning and teaching in higher education. I may not currently teach undergraduate students but I am still a teacher; however this is not how discipline-based colleagues always perceive me. MacDonald (2003: 1) suggested that it was time for academic development to become a legitimate 'discipline' in its own right. In the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), a case was put forward for 'learning and teaching' to be recognised as a distinct research category, but this was not accepted. Brew (2003: 167-168) also suggests that one of our main challenges, as academic developers, is how to defend our right to be respected as an academic discipline without alienating the discipline communities that we need to engage. We must also do this within our own working context. This is particularly relevant to me as a Doctoral student and academic member of staff at a university. It gives me multiple identities; student, practitioner/researcher, academic developer, teacher and so on. In my University, this meant that learning and teaching research either is submitted under a discipline area, or under 'Education'.

What is ironic is that over the same period of preparation for the RAE the HEFCE committed substantial sums of money to learning and teaching. This included 'ring-fenced' funding linked to institutional Learning and Teaching Strategies. Within my own institution, our small central department became the custodians of large financial resources for learning and teaching innovation and research to take place within the Academic Schools. In my University, I would argue that ILE as the 'guardians' of the Learning and Teaching Strategy and related funding were put in a position of power, by the virtue of being the holders of the 'purse strings'. Lomas (2006: 244) argues that with sector-wide initiatives, such as

widening participation and a focus on learning, teaching and assessment, there has been a shift in the locus of power in UK universities. Lomas comments that Land (2004) encourages academic developers to 'tap into' this power shift. Lomas (2006: 247) highlights a tendency for power to shift towards the centre of universities particularly in post-1992 institutions and that this has expanded the role of academic development departments. Yet people like myself working in a central academic development department, are still not viewed by some discipline-based colleagues as legitimate members of academia.

The challenge within my project was to find a framework that would accommodate my multiple identities and those of my discipline-based colleagues, which allowed us to operate in a mutually beneficial way but which still achieved my research objectives.

At the start of this project one of my identities was as the University's Student Development and Support Co-ordinator. I have always had issues with the term 'co-ordinator' as to me this seems to describe a management role, something slightly separate and above those being co-ordinated. Putting the term into a thesaurus reveals the terms; manager, director, planner, controller, arranger - none of these struck me as being very collegiate.

Given the sensitivities outlined here I looked for a model of identity that would encourage collaborative roles and responsibilities. Looking at the literature related to coaching and mentoring there seemed to be more options open to me, each option having additional nuances. I discovered a table that contrasted the various roles, (Table 1: 54) from which it emerged that how I wanted to work with colleagues was more akin to the mentoring role. Though mentoring appealed, the role as outlined within this chart was not necessarily completely what I was looking for. Bray and Nettleton (2007) state that there is little or no universal agreement on the roles and functions found in mentoring. However, the issue I have with this and other definitions of mentoring (Shea, 1992, Noe, Greenberger and Wang, 2002, Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, E, and Lima, 2004, Ragins and Kram 2007) is that the emphasis is placed on personal and/or professional growth for the mentee rather than mutual growth for all those involved in the relationship. When looking at literature on mentoring it is clear that in many American-based texts, models place an emphasis on sponsorship concepts whereas in the UK and Europe (Clutterbuck 1998) developmental mentoring has a prominence.

	Coach	Mentor	Trainer	Consultant	Therapist
Role	Partner & advocate	Teacher & guide	Teacher, expert & guide	Advisor, expert & guide	Counsellor & therapist
Authority	Client	Mentor /mentee	Trainer	Consultant	Counsellor
Uses	Curiosity, facilitation & support, counselling models	Experience , self-proven methods contacts	Models, methods, procedures	Expertise, experience	Healing methods, clinical model
Purpose	To partner with the client clarifying, aligning goals, while championing who the client is at their core	To teach the client the mentor's methods and open doors that have led to success	To teach the client skills, procedures , methods, expertise, etc. To develop skill and proficiency in an area	To advise client and provide with success strategies	To assist the client in healing traumas from the past
Client objective	To connect with their deepest values and desires and to create their own guiding principles and model of success	To understand and use the mentor's methods of success and contacts	To develop skill and proficiency in an area of an endeavour	To use the advise, expertise and strategies for success	To release the past and/or have better coping skills
Desired result	Personal alignment and profound change	Increased success by implementing the mentor's approach and contacts	Increased or improved ability and proficiency	Using the consultant's advice	Emotional healing through clinical models

Table 1 Definitions and Differences. The Coach Mentoring Group (2003)

Megginson *et al* (2006: 17) offer a distinction between sponsorship and developmental mentoring (Table 2: 55).

Sponsorship	Developmental
The mentor is more influential and hierarchically senior.	The mentor is more experienced in issues relevant to the mentee's learning needs (perhaps life in general).
The mentor gives, the protégé receives and the organisation benefits (Scandura et al, 1996).	A process of mutual growth
The mentor actively champions and promotes the cause of the protégé.	The mentor helps the mentee do things for him- or herself.
The mentor gives the protégé the benefit of his or her wisdom.	The mentor helps the mentee develop his or her own wisdom.
The mentor steers the protégé through the acquisition of experience and personal resources.	The mentor helps the mentee towards personal insights from which he or she can steer his or her own development.
The primary outcome or objective is career success.	The primary outcome or objective is personal development, from which career success may flow.
Good advice is central to the success of the relationship.	Good questions are central to the success of the relationship.
The social exchange emphasises loyalty.	The social exchange emphasises learning.

Table 2 Sponsorship v developmental mentoring.

I see these differences between the two models as being vital to the success of my project. In particular that development mentoring recognises that the mentor will have more relevant experience than the mentee but is not necessarily hierarchically senior. The emphasis is on mutual growth with the mentee developing their own understanding and ownership of the learning. Another important element of developmental mentoring lies in the structure of the phases that the mentoring relationship goes through.

Megginson *et al's* (2006: 19-21) model offers five distinct phases that the mentoring relationship goes through:

1. Building rapport
2. Setting direction
3. Progression
4. Winding up
5. Moving on

Other authors offer different but similar structures or processes, such as:

- three staged systems such as Egan's Skilled Helper Model (1994) and Alred, Garvey and Smith's (1998) mentoring process,
- Whitmore's (2003) GROW model (Growth, Reality, Option and Will),
- Zachery's (2000) four staged (preparing, negotiating, enabling and closure) mentoring processes,
- Hawkins (2009) CLEAR model (Contracting, Listening, Exploring, Action and Review), which like Megginson *et al*, has five stages.
- The seven stage model, ACHIEVE, by Eldridge and Dembkowski, (2003).

These models can be used as separate systems or in conjunction with other mentoring and coaching 'tools' such as *the Wheel of life* and *OSKAR* models (Outcome, Scaling, Know-how and resources, Affirmation and action and finally Review). I chose to use the phases in Megginson *et al* (2006) in my project for their elegance, simplicity and lack of contriteness and absence of acronyms. I knew that this would be appreciated within my institution's learning and teaching culture. The effectiveness of this choice is discussed in section 5.2 Developmental mentoring in a wider debate: 141.

2.2.8 Organisational Learning (OL)

Argyris and Schön (1996: 16) state that organisational learning occurs when,

“...individuals within an organization experience a problematic situation and inquire into it on the organization’s behalf. They experience a surprising mismatch between expected and actual results of action and respond to that mismatch through a process of thought and further action that leads them to modify their images of organization or their understandings of organizational phenomena and to restructure their activities so as to bring outcomes and expectations into line, thereby changing organizational theory-in-use”.

As a practitioner/researcher this is partially true as I am conducting my research with the blessing of my organisation and with the intention to define changes for improvement though I have not been ‘commissioned’ to do so. The motivation for the research has come from my own observed perceptions. My research is primarily based on images of my organisation from my position as an educational developer in a central department. Within Checkland and Scholes (1990) and Checkland and Poulter (2006) the first stage within SSM starts with a similar premise of a problematic situation and then moves through to defining action for improvement.

Argyris and Schön further state that,

“In order to become organizational, the learning that results from organizational inquiry must become embedded in the images of organization held in its members’ minds and/or in the epistemological artifacts (the maps, memories, and programs) embedded in the organizational environment”.

They then list eight lessons that can be drawn from inquiry (1996: 17) some of which have particular resonance with my project:

“a. interpretations of past experiences of success or failure”.

I bring my own interpretations into my research and facilitate others to share their views within the finding out phase in SSM. These experiences manifest

themselves in the finding out phase and inform real world comparisons.

“c. descriptions of the shifting organizational environment and its likely demands on future performance”.

“e. descriptions of conflicting views and interests that arise within the organization under conditions of complexity and uncertainty”.

Like point a. these two points have particular relevance to the finding out phase but in addition inform my project findings. The complexity and uncertainty of the ‘market’ of and for higher education over the life span of my project has added a layer of intricacy as the environment for defining action for improvement is constantly shifting.

“d. analysis of the potentials and limits of alternative organizational strategies, structures, techniques, information systems, or incentive systems”.

“f. images of desirable futures and invention of the means by which they may be achieved”.

These two outcomes of inquiry have a synergy with the concepts within SSM of ‘desirability’ and ‘feasibility’. Argyris and Schön (1996: 17) state that outcomes qualify as products of organisational learning if accompanied by organisational change evidenced within organisational images that retain the organisational knowledge.

Argyris and Schön (1996: preface xx) identify four questions that lie at the heart of OL. There is a synergy between these questions and the phases in SSM.

1. What is an organisation that it may learn? (SSM - finding out)
2. In what ways, if at all, are real-world organisations capable of learning? (SSM – conceptual modeling)
3. Among the kinds of learning of which organisations are, or might become capable, which ones are desirable? (SSM – real world comparisons)
4. By what means can organisations develop their capability for the kinds of learning they consider desirable? (SSM – defining action for improvement)

They each deal with real world situations and place any suggested change and/or learning within the cultural context for change and its desirability. For a practitioner/researcher student such as myself, it is important that I place my research within the context of the HE sector, my own institutional culture and within the Learning and Teaching Holon (Figure 2: 18). I would see this as being fundamental to the role of an educational developer. Not knowing the cultural context that my discipline-based colleagues are working within could lead to inappropriate assumptions and interventions that were not needed or wanted. However, my perception, as a member of a small central department, of my organisation and its ability to learn and adapt may be very different to that of my teaching colleagues operating in large discipline-based Academic Schools. These issues are discussed further in my project findings, sections 5.3 Communities of practice: 160 and section 5.4 Academics responding to change: 176. In section 5.3 I was influenced by the work of Etienne Wenger (1998) and in section 5.4 by the work of Ray Land (2004). Also, I used the work of Paul Trowler (1998 and 2003), Knight and Trowler (2001) and Becher and Trowler (2001) however I found these works less relevant to my work-based experience and to my own work role.

2.3 A reflection on this chapter

For my research I am not only a Doctoral practitioner/researcher student, I am an academic in my discipline (learning and teaching); I am also an educational developer working with discipline-based staff on learning and teaching issues. I have a duty of care to my institution, my department and to my discipline-based colleagues. It is within these different contexts that my research questions sit. I can be seen as being in a privileged position as being a practitioner/researcher gives me access to resources that an outsider researcher would not have. However, the role of a practitioner/researcher comes with responsibilities not only to the organisation in which I am employed but also to my research participants. As my doctoral project has an externally funded project within it as an entity in its own right, making participants aware of in what capacity I am engaged with them is critical to the validity of both pieces of research.

My literature review started with a very broad set of topics areas that could have been pertinent to my work. With the evolution of my research questions informed by my reading, I have gradually focused on key writers and texts that

provide a synergy to the various aspects of my project. These key writers and texts have set the scene for the methodology, activities, discussions and recommendations for my project.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Chapter 3, methodology addresses the thought processes and reasons for the decisions I took to find the appropriate research methodology for my project. I also look at ethical issues particularly when conducting research in a work-based context. The second part of this chapter critically appraises SSM the appropriateness of the different phases within SSM for my project. The key activities reported on in this chapter are selecting my methodology and defining my data collection methods.

3.1 Introduction, in the words of Kipling ...

Trafford and Leshem, (2008: 90) suggest that,

“As researchers, perhaps we should all thank Kipling (2004:58) for helping us to clarify our research design. He may not have been thinking specifically about research when he wrote:

I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.

(The Elephant’s Child)

However, collectively the words form a practical template to help interrogate any issue”.

Within this chapter, I have tried to address these six words though there is some overlap particularly on the ‘who’ as being a practitioner/researcher I have a duality of roles.

3.2 The what, why, where and when ...

This project is complex. It does not start with a problem as such but with my perception of a situation that I think could be improved. As an educational developer I am not particularly interested in absolute truths I am however,

interested in relationships, structures and influence. I would expect that information generated by my research would be open to different interpretations, dependent on different contexts and backgrounds of the reader. As stated earlier I would position myself firmly within my research as both a practitioner/researcher and as an active participant in my project. This duality of roles will also affect my approach to the evidence that I find for example as a research student and also as a member of staff. I need to pay attention to the key stakeholders in my research and my 'sponsors', the University of Wolverhampton for whom I work. Recognising these different responsibilities does not mean that I will use only positive data. In my work role I have a professional persona that is quite high profile as I work within a small but strategic department; we are not anonymous figures within my University. The majority of my research participants are people with whom I have worked closely over the last few years and are people who I would expect to be working with in the future. I need to make every effort therefore to be reflexive about what I find out so that what I present to my audiences is trustworthy. Within my work role I have previously compiled a number of reports that have had an influence on institutional policy and strategy, for example The Personal Tutor Policy (2008). To gather the data for those reports, then compile and present them to the University I have adopted a way of working that asks for initial thoughts from discipline-based colleagues. I compile the comments into a draft report, I send this draft back to colleagues for further changes. Following those comments, I seek to find an agreement on a final version. This way of working has already built up a level of trust and respect between discipline-based colleagues, the institutional decision-makers and myself that I would wish to continue in my project.

Given my preferred approach to research I would expect to use a qualitative approach rather than quantitative. In my work role, I rarely deal with statistical data other than looking at trends from data generated at institutional level. For my role any consideration of quantitative data has only ever been a starting point for further investigation which invariably leads to qualitative follow-up. For example, knowing the retention figures of our students does not reveal what makes them stay or leave or what we could do to make a difference, which is what I would be interested in. My work does require me to undertake a certain amount of deskwork and I would expect to review relevant documentation for my project but I would use fieldwork for discussions and interviews. I would therefore use a mix of both desk and fieldwork.

My own role and my approach to PDP as a practitioner/researcher is a pivotal part of this project. As Solomon *et al* (2001) comment on researchers in the workplace,

“They espouse the values of collaboration, of reflexivity and of engagement, but they run the risk of undermining their own principles if they treat learning as if it were a property of those they investigate rather than as something they are co-creating”.

One way I have addressed this is by writing reflectively throughout my research. As Solomon *et al* (2001) comment, this is something that might be intended by researchers at the start of their work but can be easily forgotten. In preparation for my research project and as an element of the ‘Research methods’ module, I kept a reflective journal. In it I recorded critical incidents; one of these changed the direction of my original project proposal and became the pivotal point for my project (see Chapter 1 Introduction: 12).

When I started my project planning in 2006, I thought that I was familiar with action research methodology, I had engaged in exploratory research that would fit into the Cohen and Manion (1994: 194) definition quoted by Bell (2005: 8) as,

“Action research is an approach that is appropriate in any context when ‘specific knowledge is required for a specific problem in a specific situation, or when a new approach is to be grafted on to an existing system”.

In a taught module in my Doctorate programme, ‘Research Methodologies’, I was introduced to Soft Systems Methodology (SSM). At the time, I did not know very much about SSM but thought that it might be appropriate for what I was hoping to research. In the forward to “Learning for Action” (2006) Professor Roy Ison states that,

“one of Checkland and Poulter’s main messages is that it is only by taking part in SSM practice that you will really understand and enjoy the benefits ...”

How true this is. In "A Ten-minute Account of Soft Systems Methodology for Very Busy People" (Checkland and Poulter 2006: XV) SSM is defined as,

"... an organized way of tackling perceived problematic (social) situations. It is action-oriented. It organizes thinking about such situations so that action to bring about improvement can be taken."

Before discussing SSM further, I am going to consider the ethical issues raised by my project.

3.3 Ethical issues

For this research to be supportive and helpful, I have been adamant that it must not cause harm to those taking part, a theme discussed by Costley and Gibbs (2006). I have a duty of care to discipline-based colleagues who are in the front-line of learning and teaching. While undertaking my Doctoral project I have conducted research and evaluation tasks within my normal day-to-day job. I have been particularly careful to make participants aware of my dual roles as both a practitioner/researcher and a member of an externally funded project. This was particularly important when collecting data from those taking part in the Pathfinder Project. I used the notion of 'informed consent'; Cousin (2009: 22), says this is,

"... about ensuring that participants in your research are aware of its purposes and their role within it".

As a condition of funding participants in the Pathfinder Project had to agree to take part in the project evaluation but this did not mean that they had to agree to take part in my research. In fact no one opted out of my project but I had to agree on anonymity particularly where disciplines could be easily identified, and discipline-based participants thus could be surmised by those 'in the know' within my University. This presented some complications given that the participants I am working with belong to relatively small identifiable communities. At best, no comments can be attributed to any specific participant.

I was concerned that as Gray (2004: 389) states,

“... merely describing someone’s role in an organisation might immediately identify an individual”.

I have therefore taken care to make sure that this does not occur wherever possible. This became increasingly important as my project progressed. Cousin (2009: 23) points out to the researcher that,

“Informed consent at the beginning of the research process might need renegotiating as the research proceeds so that the participant is made aware of the emerging exploration and analysis”.

Within my research the issue of informed consent was revisited a number of times as data interpretation was shared with my participants and an accommodation was sought that fed into my research finding.

Discipline-based participants who have taken part in my research do have an expectation that their views will have some impact on organisational change, no matter how small. Gathering the views of all participants throughout my research has meant that I have been able to express collaborative knowledge in a timely and appropriate manner. Due to a number of quite major institutional changes, e.g. Academic School mergers and the refocusing of the undergraduate curriculum, which have taken place over the life span of my work, the research processes have become equally, if not more important, than any final recommendations or conclusions. This is a view supported by Mitchell-Williams *et al* (2004).

Another duty of care that I hold is to the University that I work for. Within my Contract of Employment, ‘bringing the University into disrepute’ is a disciplinary offence. Cousin (2009: 21) quotes from the American Education Research Association (AERA) ethical guidelines on the principle concerned with respect for individuals and institutions (2008: 1),

“a) the rights, privacy, dignity and sensitivities of their (researchers) research population;

b) the integrity of the institution within which the research occurs”.

Cousin (2009: 21) further states that,

“In terms of respect for the integrity of institutions, in my experience this is often overlooked because our focus tends to be on the individuals within them. When departments and institutions open their doors to researchers, they trust that their activities will respect their right to representative, constructive and confidential (where necessary) findings which are protective of both individuals and the institution as a whole”.

This understanding is of particular importance within a piece of work-based research, as the institution is one of the stakeholders and signatories of my Learning Contract. Being a practitioner/researcher is a privileged position as one has both access to internal documentation and an insider's view of the work environment, but this privilege comes with responsibilities. In line with my stated research positionality I have submitted my draft research chapters for review by my line manager, not only because I greatly respect her research knowledge and expertise but also as this has given both of us an opportunity to discuss the implications of my research. If, as I have stated, I want to make a difference to my place of work and working practices, which is also an expected outcome of the Doctorate in Professional Studies, I believe that this can only happen through discussion and negotiation.

From the initial presentation of my Learning Contract to the final recommendations within this project the concepts of negotiation, collaboration and joint ownership have been present. This has involved getting permission from my line managers to undertake the research, getting the involvement of self-selecting teaching staff in the first stages of defining my problematic situation, getting all project participants to agree to take part in both the Pathfinder Project evaluation and my research and finally agreeing to the recommendations and conclusions. In my University ethical clearance is granted through an academic discipline-based committee because as mentioned previously, learning and teaching is not recognised as a discipline in its own right within the RAE structure. The University research structure maps onto that of the RAE. Ethical clearance is via the School of Education. However, their terms of reference are primarily based on research conducted in schools. Within their remit my research participants are not considered vulnerable. Nor does my proposal involve access to confidential records, so as such did not cause any major issues for ethical clearance within my own institutional research ethics

structures. With hindsight, I would have subjected my proposal to a more rigorous scrutiny based on an understanding of the ethical issues related to practitioner research as discussed above.

I was conscious that within the Pathfinder Project (2007/08), I was defined as the 'senior advisor'; this title was primarily for an external audience as I had a different internal title as a member of ILE. To an external audience I was the 'voice' of the project as the project manager did not attend the national project events or present any of the project activities. Internally I did not really consider how I would be perceived by those acting as mentors given that I had worked closely with them over the last few years. However, those tutors who were to be the mentees were either new or less close to me. For the Pathfinder Project an internal evaluator was appointed, who at that time had a lower profile and was not then a member of ILE. Perceptions of her identity changed dramatically over the course of the project as she gained the respect of all. I would argue that she rightly became the internal figurehead of the project as I had become similar to the external audience. Although we were both high profile in our own ways neither of us were actually strategic managers as this was a role that was taken by the project manager. However we did have close communications with him. It was the internal evaluator and myself who wrote the final project reports and project deliverables. It is difficult to judge how we were perceived by the discipline-based Pathfinder Project participants and how that could have affected their responses to us but the data we were given was very frank. Cousin, (2009:21) suggests that,

"We cannot design out power from our research but we can acknowledge its presence and do our best to minimize its effects. Clearly researching *with* students is one way of doing this".

As a practitioner/researcher I have acknowledged my position within the research and am clear that I want to research with colleagues rather than on them.

3.4 The how ...

When considering appropriate research methods for this project I felt uncomfortable with some of the definitions and purposes of action research. As Gill and Johnson (2002: 75) state, the term has become fashionable, giving rise to a large literature and many varied uses of the term. Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007: 84-86) state that one purpose of action research is,

“To plan, implement, review and evaluate an intervention designed to improve practice/solve local problems”.

I had particular difficulty with the concept of identifying a problem, looking for a solution/intervention and evaluating the effectiveness of the solution/intervention.

Cousin, (2009: 149) offers a different view of action research that I find more appealing,

“Action research offers a means by which research and development (be it institution wide or at the level of local practice) can be combined within a framework of public, reflective inquiry”.

I was less confident with a model of action research that identified a problem, as I was not sure that there was a specific problem which needed solving; it was only my perception of a problematic situation that I had observed and reflected on. Furthermore, I felt privileged to have been invited to team-teach and did not want my perception of that experience to be seen by other discipline-based colleagues as a criticism to those already engaged in PDP practice. Secondly, any solution would have to be implemented by others as I had no undergraduate students of my own. Thirdly, any evaluation of a solution would have to be based on other people's observed practice.

My own lack of confidence and perceptions of action research were in part gained by my attendance at both internal and external events, seminars and conferences where 'action research' was often the methodology presented. The majority of presentations seemed to describe a problem, offer a solution and discuss the outcomes. That did not seem the right model for my project though I recognised the 'landscape' in which the presentations were situated. For

example, Lewin's model of social enquiry (1946) describes an intertwining cyclical process of planning, action, observation and reflection as potentially creating a tension between wanting to work with colleagues in a way that promotes mutual growth and a view that I was in some way critical of their work.

As a student on the Doctorate in Professional Studies I was introduced to Soft Systems Methodology (SSM), which seemed to give me a process of enquiry that satisfied the various complications I had identified. Before deciding on using SSM I considered what other colleagues in the HE sector looking at PDP issues were using. A number of other researchers (Beetham, Cambridge, Hughes, Peters) used ethnographic approaches and phenomenography. Both of these approaches are classed as naturalistic inquiry (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007, Cousin 2009) I can see the appeal in both these approaches as they relate to story telling, inviting research participants to write and tell their own accounts. Data is context rich and meaning arises out of social situations (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007). I have had experience of participation in both of these methodologies and rejected them for this project partly from my own experiences and partly from my views that I felt they did not best fit my research project terms of reference. Cousin (2009: 109) cautions that,

"Ethnographic approaches appeal to those who are confident that they have the time to stay in a research setting (the field) for at least a couple of weeks (it might be where they work anyway) for sustained observation and informal interviewing".

Whilst I would be undertaking my research at work, my work environment is very different from that of discipline-based colleagues. My role includes working across the different university campuses, with different disciplines; each day is very different to the next. Even if my University supported my research this approach would take a lot of time that I just would not be able to justify. I would not have the time to stay in the research situation.

Over the life span of my research I became involved in projects that used Appreciative Inquiry (AI). Had I known about this approach at the start of my work I might have considered it appropriate. Cousin (2009: 167) says that,

“Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a research method that is often used to underpin change management processes ... Like action research, AI is solution-oriented. A key appeal of AI concerns the relative ease with which ethical clearance can be secured for its conduct because it provides a potentially unthreatening way of researching learning environments or academic cultures”.

AI is not about fixing what is broken but is more about identifying what works and developing and transferring that practice. Within AI are four iterative stages – the four D’s - discovery, dream, design and destiny. AI has many qualities found in other methodologies such as positive story telling, visual representation, interviews and collaboration and uses them in a similar way to SSM. The concept of a dream and design phase is similar to working in the ‘systems world’ in SSM. AI moves back to the ‘real world’, similar to SSM for the destiny phase. Though AI may have been an option I believe SSM is the correct methodology for my research.

3.4.1 The appeal of SSM in a work-based environment

As a practitioner/researcher I am very conscious of finding a research methodology that would lend itself to work-based learning. There are many elements of SSM that appeal to me on both a personal and professional level but there were two in particular that appealed in relation to work-based research; these are the notions of desirability and feasibility.

3.4.1.1 Desirability and feasibility

A key aim of SSM is to make changes that are both desirable and feasible within the environment in which the investigation is taking place. Checkland and Poulter (2006: xvii) suggest that within the ‘shape’ of the SSM process, through discussion with participants on the conceptual models offered that,

“The purpose now is to find changes which are both arguably *desirable* (given these models) but are culturally *feasible* for these people in this particular situation with its particular history, culture and politics”.

The use of the words 'desirable' and 'feasible' is, in my view, very important as it supports the notion of an accommodation for defining improvement, recognising that different stakeholders and participants will have very different worldviews on these issues.

Checkland and Poulter (2006:6) use a definition of worldview within SSM that is,

"We develop 'worldviews', built-in tendencies to see the world in a particular way. ... Such worldviews are relatively stable but change over time.

This concept of worldview (the German *Weltanschauung* being the best technical world for it) is the most important concept in understanding the human complexity of human situation, and indeed, the nature and form of SSM".

I was aware of this intention at the start of this project but did not appreciate just how important this would be over the lifespan of my work. The ability to review, reconceptualise and return to key stakeholders became very important as my work environment changed. Over the life of my project there have been a number of ongoing structural changes including, voluntary redundancies, restructuring of departments and academic schools, a change in the student population and a full review and restructuring of the whole of the undergraduate curriculum, the Learning Works initiative (2008 – 2010). There is a feeling of vulnerability and uncertainty within my own institution and the HE sector in general. However, the ability to re-contextualise my project in the changing environment means that the project has remained relevant and topical to my stakeholders.

3.4.1.2 Dual worlds

SSM works within two different worlds; that of the 'real world', in which the problematic situation and participants exist, where ultimately any action for improvement is defined, and then in a 'systems world'. The systems world is where a conceptual model is designed and refined without the constraints of the real world. This allows discussion about what practitioners feel about their

current environment, helping to define the problematic situation but also allowing one a way of thinking about what could occur in an ideal world. The comparison between the conceptual model and the perceived reality is an environment that offers the chance for focused and rich exchanges of ideas. The dual worlds also fit nicely with the duality of the practitioner/researcher role which equally considers two different identities. I found this particularly relevant when looking at the different discipline-based cultures. A central department, such as my own, is often criticised as not being in the real world of undergraduate learning and teaching. By taking a concept forward for discussion before implementation then all participants can play an active part in any action for improvement thus reducing tensions and unanswered questions (Checkland and Poulter 2006: 4). This can also help with adjusting the attitudes of teaching staff where they perceive change may be being imposed on them, top-down without a clear rationale. This is a view expressed in a number of staff meetings (2009/10) regarding a major institution-wide refocusing of the undergraduate curriculum. The ability to take an active part in research, to have your say and potentially influence the working of a central strategic department has been voiced by participants who opted into my project, as a motivational factor for taking part.

3.4.1.3 The LUMAS model

Checkland and Poulter (2006: 19) offer a generic model for,

“ ... making sense of any real-world application of any methodology, remembering that that word covers a set of principles which need to be embodied in an application tailored to meet the unique features of a particular situation”.

This model is called LUMAS and stands for Learning for a User by a Methodology-informed Approach to a Situation (Checkland and Poulter 2006: 20) Figure 15: 73.

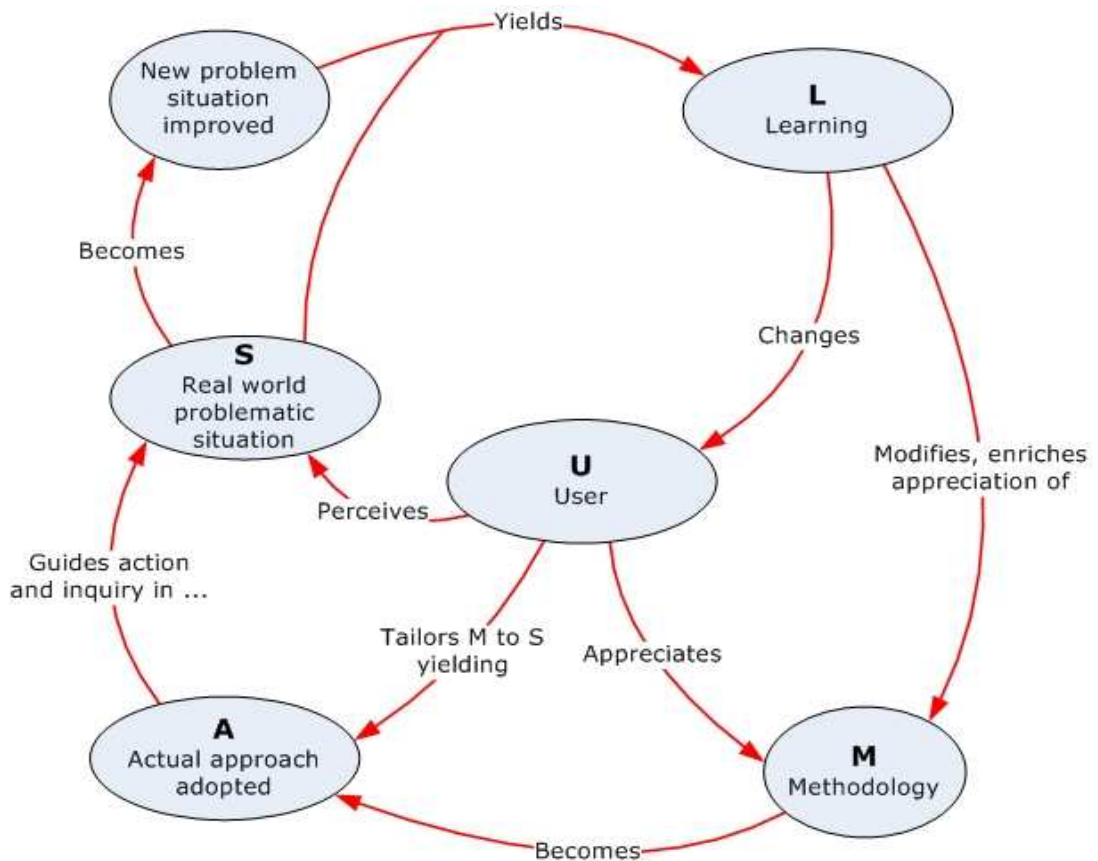


Figure 15 The LUMAS model (2006:20)

To understand this model Checkland and Poulter (2006: 19) suggest that one should,

“... start from the User (U) in the centre. He or she, perceiving a problem situation (S) and appreciating the methodology (M), tailors the latter to the former to produce the specific approach (A) to be used in this situation (S). This not only produces an improved situation but also yields learning (L). This will change the user, who has gained this experience, and may also modify or enrich appreciation of the methodology”.

In an effort to understand my research journey I revisited the LUMAS model and created a map of my project (Figure 39: 193) drawing very heavily on a model that Checkland and Poulter offer (2006: 20). At the start of my project I did not appreciate or know what sense to make of this model but as I have reflected on it throughout my research journey I found that it gives me a framework to make sense of what I have achieved.

3.4.1.4 SSM phases

When I first started to use SSM I clutched at the comfortable seven stage approach as outlined by Checkland in 1981 (Checkland and Scholes, 1990: A12) that has been interpreted by many different SSM writers on and users of SSM. For my project approval presentation (PAP) I used Patching's (1990: 41) seven-step model (Figure 16: 75) as a mechanism for articulating my research project and for structuring how my research would be conducted over the next three to four years. Patching's model seemed easy to follow and mapped out activities for each phase. This initially felt like a visual 'comfort-blanket' for my research activities. However, as I started to use SSM, as Checkland and Poulter suggest (2006: 14), the adherence to this classic seven-step approach can be, and was, unhelpful. Checkland and Scholes (1990: 281) found that by the experience of using SSM there emerged a spectrum of SSM usage with at one end a rigid use of the seven stages (Mode 1) to at the other a more flexible and internal ownership of the SSM processes by its user(s) (Mode 2). As outlined in my introduction my use of SSM would be clearly Mode 2.

In 2006, Checkland and Poulter offered an emergent process with four different kinds of activity that I found more useful as I became more confident with SSM. These activities are; finding out, making some purposeful activity models, using those models to question the real situation and defining and if appropriate taking the action to improve the situation. These activities are discussed further in section 3.4.2 Data collection: 76. Within these four different activities are various 'tools' such as, the mnemonic CATWOE (discussed in section 4.2.2 CATWOE and 5 'E's: 117) that appear in the seven stage model but not in a, "stately linear progress" (Checkland and Poulter 2006: 23).

When I started my research I would have welcomed Checkland and Poulter's 2006 book "Learning for Action". As a novice SSM user, I found Checkland and Scholes' (1990) work difficult to access as I did not have the lexicon of SSM at that stage; an example of this would be terms such as 'holon'. I, like others before me, have looked at secondary literature on SSM that has grown from its first account published in 1972. I would agree with Checkland and Poulter when they state that this secondary literature is of poor quality (2006: xii). What I think is particularly noticeable is the strict presentation of SSM as a seven-step linear process that precludes any flexibility.

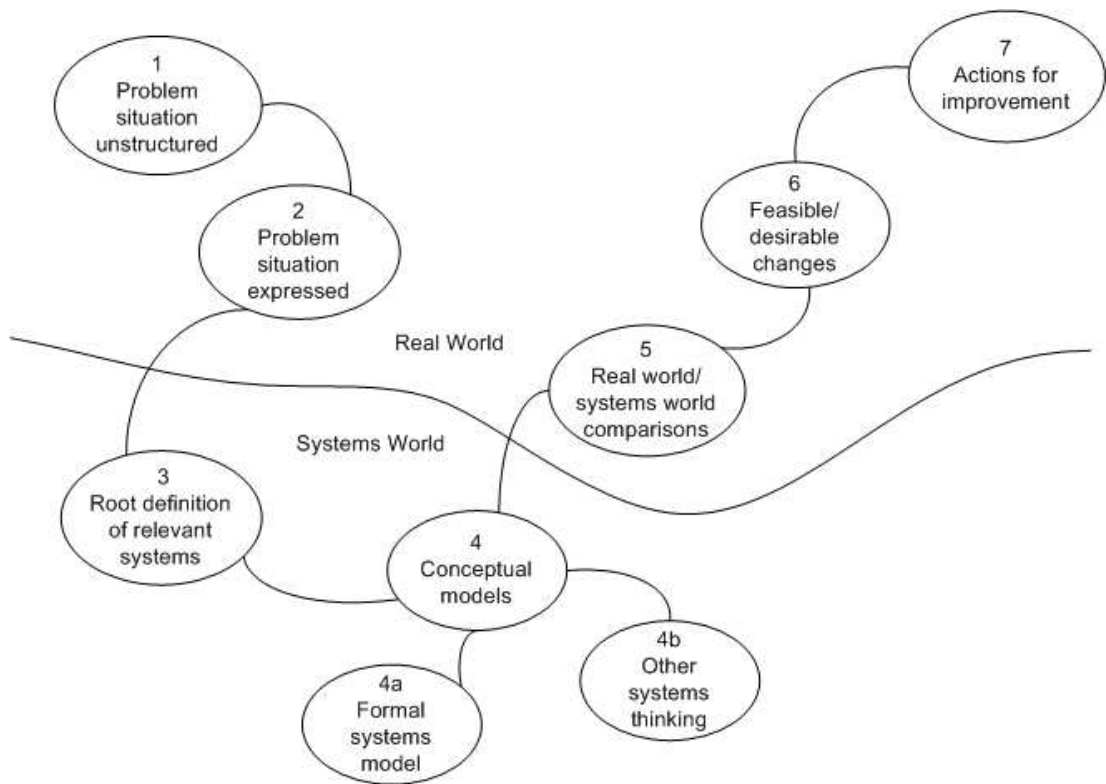


Figure 16 The SSM model, Patching, D

I should have been more aware of this from my PAP presentation when one of my assessors commented that I had misquoted Checkland and Scholes (1990) definition of a human activity system. However, I had accurately quoted Patching (1990), who I was informed, had misquoted Checkland and Scholes. To cap this off, my assessor informed me that he knew Checkland personally as they had been students together at University. This should have been a lesson to me on using primary sources of information. With this in mind therefore I returned to Checkland and 'others' work as the key reference material for my research methodology though I have tried to cross reference this with other sources of information on other areas linked to SSM such as the development of rich pictures (Monk and Howard 1998 and Horan 2002).

3.4.2 Data collection

The data collected was different in each of the four different activity phases that Checkland and Poulter (2006: 13) describe as the SSM learning cycle,

1. finding out
2. making purposeful activity models
3. using models to question the real situation
4. defining/taking action to improve the situation.

3.4.2.1 Finding out

Checkland and Poulter (2006: 23) identify four ways of finding out about a problematic situation that they say has become a normal part of using SSM. For my analysis of SSM I have grouped these four ways into two areas firstly, making rich pictures and secondly, Analysis 1, 2, and 3. The description and narrative of my use of any 'tools' in relation to my project activities does not feature here but does form the major part of Chapter 4: 92.

The first stage of my research aimed to define the 'problematic situation'. Data for this stage was gathered by inviting self-selecting members of the Learning and Teaching Holon to take part in semi-structured interviews. These interviews were audio recorded. Semi-structured interviews can provide both qualitative and quantitative data (Brewerton and Millward 2001). The data from the semi-structured interviews helped me identify trends and priorities that allowed me to develop a rich picture (Figure 19: 108). The picture was then taken back to the participants for discussion. The outcomes of this stage informed the design of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) Pathfinder Project: Embedding ePDP in Level 1. (May 2007 to May 2008). It is not my intention in this chapter to go into detail about the various elements in the rich picture, (Figure 19: 108), but there are a number of issues that the creation of it raises which appear to relate to methodology.

As I have an art and design background, I found myself creating a 'sketch-book' of visual reflections that were meaningful to me but not necessarily accessible to others without detailed explanation. To provide myself with something that I felt

could be shared and was accessible to others I created an image that was more than text with stickmen and squiggly connecting lines as are often seen in the examples of rich pictures in SSM for example (Checkland and Poulter, 2006: 29). Checkland and Poulter (2006: 25) explain that,

“In making a Rich Picture the aim is to capture, informally, the main entities, structures and viewpoints in the situation, the processes going on, the current recognized issues and any potential ones”.

In addition they believe that the pictures can show far more than can be captured in prose I would whole heartedly agree with this view. For example when reading Argyris and Schön (1996: 13) I came across this description,

“We define a theory of action in terms of a particular situation, S, a particular consequence, intended in that situation, C, and an action strategy, A, for obtaining consequence C in situation S. The general form of a theory of action is: If you intend to produce consequence C in situation S, then do A”.

This description goes on for a further 5 lines, to make sense of this I had to map it out. Checkland and Poulter (2006: 25) further suggest that,

“Wise practitioners continually produce such pictures as an aid to thinking. They become a normal way of capturing impressions and insights”.

Checkland and Poulter might cry in horror at my image, seeing it as being too controlled and clean. However, I felt that I needed to have form, shape and colour to give my image meaning for me and then to use it with others. Ideally, I would have loved to add animation to show interactions and relationships but this has been impractical.

I drew upon some conventions suggested by Monk and Howard (1998) including the use of crossed swords depicting conflict or tension between stakeholders and speech bubbles for concerns. I also used the crossed swords to denote where I felt that it was impossible and/or impractical to suggest improvement. For example, an issue came out of the semi-structured interviews regarding the fact that staff did not feel they had enough time to engage in their own PDP/CPD.

They felt that this issue was created by line managers' interpretation of their academic contract. Neither my department nor I could get involved with contractual issues. In addition to the crossed swords I used red flags to warn of issues, both external and internal, that I perceived might have an effect on the context of my research, and a clock to denote issues relating to time.

I spent some time deciding upon images that represented roles and relationships that I perceived within my institutional structure. I used visual metaphors such as chess pieces to represent senior executive as strategic managers. ILE were represented as cogwheels working with School learning and teaching teams (smaller cogwheels), meshed together as an entity within a bigger 'machine' and the academic school structures as a hierarchical family tree. The organic growth of this picture from simple pencil sketches led me through a visual reflective process that has made me question how I perceive my own institutional structure and therefore the development of meaningful images for my beliefs. When I have presented this rich picture to others in my own institution and in national and international settings many have commented on the fact that they feel they too can interpret the image. This reflects a key strength of accessibility within the rich picture method, as it enables access, debate and discussion by all players.

Monk and Howard (1998) state that an effective rich picture should have the following elements:

- Structure - Include only enough structure to record the process and concerns
- Process - Use a 'broad brush' approach
- Concerns - Caricatured as speech bubbles and explain more fully in supplementary documentation
- Language - Use that of the people depicted in the picture
- Pictorial or textual devices - Use any that suit your purpose.

Horan (2002) advocates the rich picture as being a new and flexible graphic organiser. Though acknowledging that they have been used for some time in systems development, Horan sees the rich picture as a new and useful tool for learning and teaching. I would agree that the lexicon of SSM including the term 'rich picture' is not widely used in a systematic way within learning and teaching

however, the concept of visualising a problematic situation is used.

Where I would agree with Checkland and others is that any image should be organic and fresh, not stilted or over-designed. It should be evolving and not seen as a final product. Checkland's (with others) liking for hand-drawn rich pictures is supported by Horan (2000: 258) who comments that,

"... the amateurish appearance of the RP may make it less threatening that a more formal technique such as DFD's" [data flow diagrams].

Checkland and Poulter (2006: 195-198) corroborate Horan's view.

"The literatures of control engineering and management science have many diagrams dominated by straight lines, right angles and rectangular boxes. These convey the impression: this is the case, full stop! The hand-drawn diagrams in the SSM literature aim to convey an organic rather than a mechanical impression. They underline that absolute certainty is forever elusive in human affairs; they are working diagrams, part of the learning process. And they look more human, more attractive than straight lines and right angles".

Since Monk and Howard (1998), Horan (2000, 2002) and even Checkland and Poulter (2006) there have been major technological advances affecting the ability to create and access digital images. I believe this makes it much easier to create organic and fresh rich pictures that have form, colour and are visually more sophisticated than grey stick men on white paper. There is a place for the flip-chart paper and marker pen drawing particularly with group work. However, I have been to and participated in many workshops where these drawings happen and then disappear after the event. What I feel that I have done within my research is to take this kind of 'quick and dirty' drawings, reflected on them, and created a rich picture for action using Cowan's (2006) coil, looped learning approach. Cousin (2009: 215) corroborates this view,

"Depending on the purpose and the context of the research, this source of intelligence [visual data] can be a vital means by which we understand what is going on in a given setting".

Making rich pictures and Analyses 1, 2 and 3 are articulated as part of the 'finding out' phase. However, they should not be thought of as only relevant to

the first step in a linear process as they are constantly changing as the research is grounded in an organic, shifting cultural and political context.

As introduced earlier, the second set of 'tools' in the finding out stage are three kinds of inquiry, Analysis 1 (the intervention), Analysis 2 (social) and Analysis 3 (political). As a practitioner/researcher I am very aware that by researching within my own organisation I have a privileged position but also hold a duty of care (Costley and Gibbs 2006) to both those I work with and the institution that I work for. Checkland and Poulter (2006: 27-38) offer a way of thinking which is complementary to the concept of being a practitioner/researcher. They identify roles that feature in later SSM tools, such as 'client' and 'owner' and the role of 'practitioner' whose task it is to carry out an investigation using SSM. In this project I have the roles of 'practitioner', also as one of the 'clients'; a person or group of people who have created the need for an investigation and potential intervention. I will also be affected by my research and any outcomes and therefore, become an 'owner' as well. Analysis 1 helps the practitioner think about these roles. For the work-based learner this approach in SSM is very powerful in helping tease out the complex influences on them.

Analysis 2 helps the researcher to contextualise both the problematic situation and ultimately the cultural desirability and cultural feasibility of any proposed intervention. Whatever is offered as a transformation or intervention the action will affect others in either a direct or indirect way. Social analysis tries to address the social reality of any potential action and this will impact on the cultural desirability and cultural feasibility. As Checkland and Poulter (2006: 32), state,

"If we are to learn our way to practical action which will improve a situation under investigation, then the changes involved in 'improvement' have to be not only arguably desirable but also *culturally* feasible. They need to be possible for these particular people, with their particular history and particular ways of looking at the world. We have to understand the local 'culture', at a level beyond that of individual worldviews".

Checkland and Poulter, while acknowledging that there are many different definitions of 'culture', offer a model within SSM that consists of three elements, roles, norms and values.

They add (2006: 32-33), that

“The subtlety comes from the fact that none of these elements is static. Each, over time, continually helps create and modify the other two elements. Together the three elements help create the social texture of a human situation, something which will both endure *and* change over time”.

Each of the three elements is further defined (2006: 33-34):

- Roles – formally recognised or informally gained, e.g. a reputation, social positions that mark differences between members in a group or organisation.
- Norms - expected behaviours associated with and helping define a role.
- Values – the standards or criteria by which behaviour-in-role get judged.

This model is particularly appealing for me as a practitioner/researcher. For example, over the life span of my project my role has changed a number of times and with those changes my identity both within and external to the organisation. With the Pathfinder Project and the rise of ePortfolio based learning initiatives I became more high profile outside of my institution both as an individual and as a senior representative of that organisation.

Within my shared rich picture Analysis 3 could be defined by those areas where crossed swords and red flags are found. These denote areas that I felt I could not or would not want to operate in given my perception of the internal politics relating to change within my institution during the period of my project. This included a call for voluntary redundancies and the potential for compulsory redundancies. Checkland and Poulter (2006: 36) use the term ‘commodity’ as a metaphor for power, offering many different ways that power could be defined, for example by being a member of a committee, having personal charisma and possessing information. As with Analysis 2, Analysis 3 changes over time and is not static.

While undertaking my project I have also gathered views and opinions from a range of people engaged with PDP working in different HEI’s, facilitated by the

Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA). I have presented various elements of my research journey in CRA annual national residential seminars (2005 – present). I have also included my work in the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme Project (2007 – 2010) to establish a National Action Research Network (NARN) on researching and evaluating PDP and e-Portfolio Practice (16 UK HEI's) and as a contribution to my institution's research as part of the Inter/national Coalition for ePortfolio Research (INCEPR), Cohort IV (2007-2010). My reason for doing this was to share practice with a community of practitioners who have a different perspective to that of my own work environment but who are dealing with similar situations. This has given trustworthiness to my research although my research data is very specific to my own working environment. I am taking the notion of 'trustworthiness' from Cousin (2009: 8), she suggests that,

"Notions of validity are replaced by those of trustworthiness within interpretivism ... but, broadly, it is commonly held to be secured through moves such as triangulation (comparing different data sources), and/or through checking accounts with research subjects, demonstrating researcher reflexivity, collecting and surfacing sufficient data for plausibility and providing rich descriptive and analytical accounts".

By sharing the methodology and in particular, the conceptual modelling, colleagues from other institutions have been able to discuss my suggested action for improvement within their own work settings. This has been particularly relevant within regional meetings of the NARN project that brings together seven post-1992 universities. The methodological model for the NARN project (2007) is stated as being participant action research. The project further states that the methodology is inclusive from the outset and has much of the 'dissemination' built in to the project's operation by involving a wide group of practitioners in the project process. The support of CRA members and in particular the NTFS: NARN have provided an important critical forum for me as a practitioner/researcher that exists outside of my direct work environment. As a member of this forum, I decided to offer three different research contributions. The first was my Doctoral project, offered as an individual contribution. The second, an institutional evaluation based on a countenance model of evaluation (Deepwell 2002) conducted with a colleague from my own department. The third was an investigation, using appreciative inquiry, aimed at informing staff development policy and practice; a collaborative piece of work between discipline academics in three schools, two early career researchers and myself. Whilst all three projects

intertwined and supported each other, I felt that I needed to separate out my different identities so that I could adequately address different perspectives as a student, a practitioner/researcher, as a senior academic and as a member of a strategic department. As a practitioner/researcher I have found this a vital group that has helped me challenge and explore my own personal constructs and cultural perspectives not always obvious to me as I am too close to my research environment. I have used this peer support to try out, articulate and explore various elements of my project.

The I/NCEPR has also provided an international forum for discussion of my work. Each cohort works on an individual project and contributes to a collective cohort research question. In Cohort IV the University of Wolverhampton's research question is "What are the facilitating and inhibiting factors in building capability and capacity of staff in supporting the use of ePortfolio?", as the institutional lead for both the NARN project and for the I/NCEPR initiative I have been able to feed in my doctoral project experiences. The I/NCEPR has been less influential on my work as a practitioner/researcher because within this forum my identity has been more corporate and I have had a role supporting early career researchers.

Both external research networks provided member checking and peer debriefing and support to combat threats to validity (Robson 2002). In particular, I have been very conscious of researcher and respondent bias, as my colleagues and I have all been so involved in developing institutional pedagogic understanding and implementing ePDP as well as researching and evaluating what could be perceived as our own work.

The external networks have been particularly helpful for the finding out stage and for discussion of the conceptual model for real world comparisons. However, when defining action for improvement the research is placed within my own work context. This does not mean that the lessons learnt are not transferable to other situations.

3.4.2.2 Making purposeful activity models

SSM uses a number of 'tools' to create a 'purposeful activity model' that can then be trialled in real world situations. Checkland and Poulter (2006: 38-48) give details of each of the tools:

- Root definitions – a statement describing the activity that will be modelled
- The PQR formula – do P, by Q in order to achieve R
- 'CATWOE' - defining the transformation process, by whom, constrained and supported by what
C = clients, A = Actors, T = the transformation, W = world view, O = owners and E = environment
- The 3 E's – *efficacy, efficiency, effectiveness* (sometimes 4 E's - add *elegance* or 5 E's - add *ethicality*)
- Primary Task or Issue-Based definitions

I have used all of these tools in section 4.2 Making purposeful activity models: 114, as I felt that as I was a fledgling SSM user these tools gave me research methods that moved me from a big picture towards conceptualising a model in a systems world without the 'hindrance' of reality. The model could then move into the real world of those teaching in an undergraduate curriculum. Basden and Wood-Harper (2006) outline their own and other authors' criticisms of the tools offered by Checkland (with others) however I feel there is a flaw in any criticism of the tools as these are often based on how others have interpreted and used SSM. In my view the criticisms miss the point that as a user of SSM you become the owner of the methodology and will use it in a framework that is meaningful to you and your situation. It is not a rigid, step-by-step process but is flexible and adaptable to change. Basden and Wood-Harper (2006: 62) highlight that they and others (Jackson 1991 and Minger 1980 in Basden and Wood-Harper 2006) find SSM less useful in conflict situations, I would argue that then this is not the right methodology for that area but it does not invalidate SSM for other situations.

What is key within this phase of SSM is the ability to work within a conceptual framework that allows one to plan an ideal or a range of ideal models that may

bring about change for improvement. This does not require work within the real world at this stage. As mentioned earlier SSM has similarities with appreciative inquiry (AI). AI would articulate this element as being the 'dream' stage and as such both research methodologies allow for an element of creativity than can then be tested in the real world.

3.4.2.3 Using the models to question the real situation

By presenting a model or models to the stakeholders in the project a focus upon debate and discussion is encouraged. The model moves things forward rather than starting with a blank piece of paper. By finding out about the situation and using the various tools to build a model(s), the researcher becomes far more aware of the problematic situation. In my own situation I would equate my journey to this stage as being one of theoretically understanding the problematic situation and that by now using the model in a real situation I would be adding the practical knowledge with a pilot group prior to implementation. This stage is definitely one where mutual growth takes place. Checkland and Poulter (2006: 49) state that this stage is often described (Checkland and Scholes 1990, Patching 1990, Horan 2000, Tsoi 2002) as a 'comparison' but they see this by 2006 as a dangerous word to use as it can imply that there is a 'perfect' model to compare deficiencies against. I would agree with this, as any comparison is dependent upon the desirability and feasibility of the suggested model in the culture in which it might be implemented. In my project the model that I was suggesting was tested not only within 10 different Academic School cultures, but also then in 16 different discipline situations and finally within my own department. For each party, our real world situation was different and perceived differently by other colleagues. However what enables discussion to be taken out of the individual towards a collective are the two basic questions that SSM suggest, paraphrased as 'is what is modelled culturally feasible?' and 'is what is modelled culturally desirable?' In my project, I asked the questions in the other order. My reason for doing so was that before looking at the feasibility, I first needed to ascertain its desirability. I was aware that my department might be able to make a change to our educational development practice but that there would be no point in doing so if that was not what discipline-based staff wanted. The structured discussions highlight the different world views and value each participant's purposeful activity in a way that can and did show the cultural

diversities within a given single institution. In a mass higher education setting the phrase 'one-size fits all' is often used in a derogatory way. The testing of a model in the real world context goes in some way to countering this view as discussion takes place prior to any action for improvement. As Checkland and Poulter (2006: 54-55) state discussion is not about finding 'consensus' but is about finding 'accommodation' between people working to achieve the same purposeful activity.

As the project has progressed I have used various data available to me as a member of my institution. Some of the data was collected specifically for this project, other data was collected as part of two institutional schemes that I was a senior member of, the Pathfinder Project and secondly, an institution-wide evaluation of ePortfolio pedagogy and practice (Lawton and Purnell 2009). For the two institutional projects and my own research, all personal data was anonymous in all publications unless specific permission was given. This was particularly important as some of the data included collaborative web-folios and blog entries. The three retreats that formed a major part of the Pathfinder Project provided me with opportunities to collect data from observations. The field notes that I took formed the basis of discussions with discipline-based and ILE colleagues recording their different worldviews and understandings on what had occurred. The ethical issues related to this work have previously been discussed in section 3.3 Ethical issues: 64. The Pathfinder Project design (Figure 17: 87) is discussed in detail in section, 4.3 Using the model for discussion and debate in the real world: 121, and shows key points for data collection, however individual follow-up interviews were also conducted after the major events.

The re-purposing of data as a practitioner/researcher, I felt was important if my project was to make a difference to my institution and/or profession, that being a fundamental principle of a Doctorate in Professional Studies. I feel that my research achieves far more relevance and influence by using both specific and re-purposed data, in fact both have influenced the other in such a way that I feel that there is a seamlessness between my doctorate and my day-to-day job.

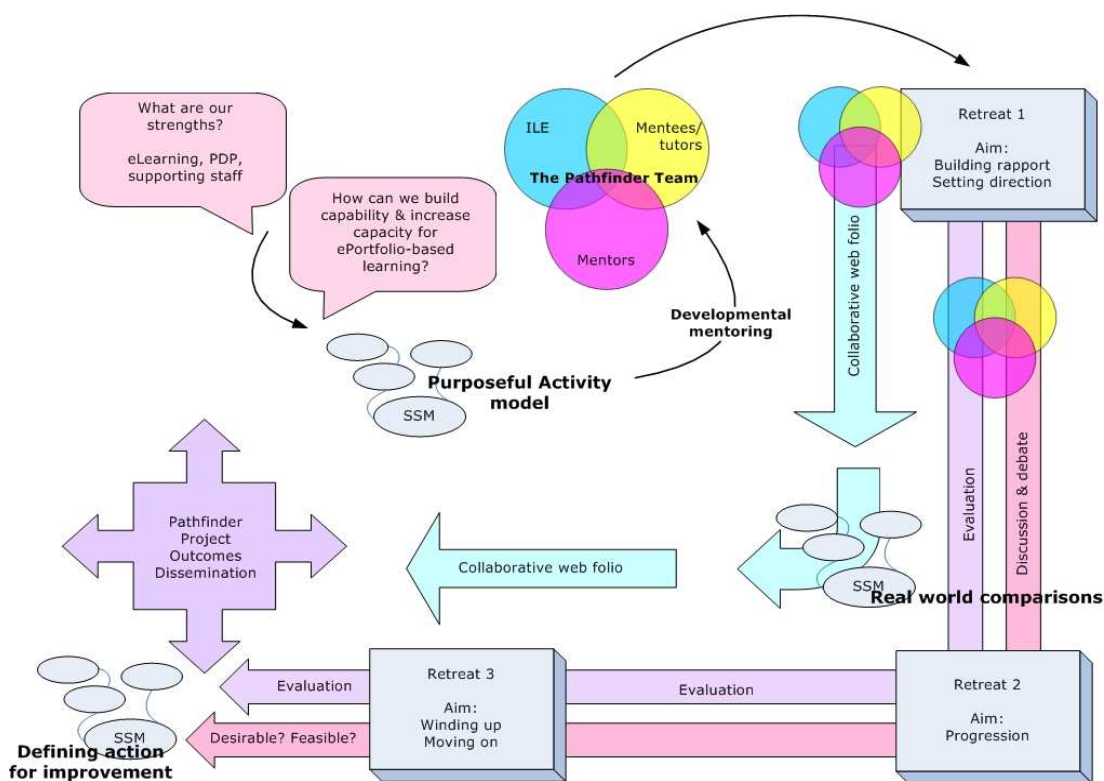


Figure 17 The HEA Pathfinder Project 2007/08

3.4.2.4 Defining action for improvement

I would define my role in the project as being the arbitration 'tool' to find an accommodation between the various stakeholders that could ultimately lead to an action for improvement. I state this partly as I am the storyteller of this work, as the SSM user, and partly because of my role within my own department and my department's positioning within my institution. Checkland and Poulter (2006: 55) suggest that accommodation as an abstract can be complex to introduce but as an agent for change it is possible to explore potential changes and then respond to the reactions they cause. They suggest that change within human situations can be broken into three parts: changes to structures, to processes or procedures or to attitudes (Checkland and Poulter 2006: 56). As a practitioner/researcher this is a very useful concept as it helps define ones own sphere of influence. For example, within my own institutional culture my sphere of influence is great in changing attitudes. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 SSM activities: 92 and in Chapter 5 Project findings and analysis: 138 and can be seen clearly within my shared rich picture.

3.5 Data analysis

Within SSM the data analysis is ongoing and cyclical with different data informing different phases. The analysis is undertaken by all participants but with myself as the principal inquirer ultimately taking responsibility for the interpretation and presentation of the data to various stakeholders.

I have also found within my project that what I have discovered and what I conclude and recommend is complicated by my multiple identities. On one hand I need to present findings from the Pathfinder Project to summarise that activity but on the other I need another set of linked but different findings to inform my Doctoral project as a practitioner/researcher. I consider these two differing needs within the Pathfinder Project briefly in section 5.1 Developmental mentoring in the Pathfinder project: 138 and I concentrate on three areas related to my work role in section, 5.2 Developmental mentoring in a wider debate:141, section 5.3 Communities of practice: 160 and section 5.4 Academics responding to change: 176. The analysis in these sections took place within the SSM scaffolding by using discussion with key stakeholders, informed by relevant theoretical frameworks and supported by visuals. The use of visual representation helped reach an accommodation by giving a focus and direction to discussions.

Cousin (2009: 215) suggests that,

“There is good evidence that the verbal accounts of subjects follow a different level of recall and logic to that of their visual accounts (Samuels, 2007), demonstrating that the visual should not be treated as mere illustration of the textual”.

I would argue that the SSM brings both the visual and verbal together creating rich exchanges.

3.6 A reflection on this chapter

In both written and face-to-face guidance on this chapter I was advised that this was a chapter that could be written early on in my research. This is true in one sense as it is important to know what is being done and why. Looking back on my original project proposal and my early drafts of this chapter I now shudder to see my naivety. To start with I clutched at Patching as an easy way into SSM. I quickly outgrew Patching (1990), and returned to Checkland (with others) and initially clung to the seven steps towards 'enlightenment' and hopefully achieved a certain level of ownership of the methodology. I loved the tangible 'tools' that I could see I might use and this gave me confidence to try something new. These seemed to deal with all the different layers and complexity of my research. The use of visual conceptual modelling played to my strengths and gave me a freedom of expression that helped clarify my holistic, intuitive and creative thinking. As I became part of my research I quickly realised that although Patching (1990) acknowledges that SSM is not a technique he only suggests that it should be seen as a "set of guidelines"; this under sells the maturity of SSM. As I became more confident with SSM I realised that the shift from the seven stages of SSM in the 1970's - 1990's towards the four different kinds of activity being articulated in Checkland and Poulter (2006) would take me through SSM to an end goal in a way that gave me and my research participants' flexibility and control.

As my project has progressed, technology, both hard and software, has changed, which has in turn affected both the tools I use for my research and the emphasis of my research. Checkland (with others) exalts the use of paper and pencil to create and capture models and rich pictures rather than using computers. Though this has often been my starting point I have felt that these first images are mere doodles of first ideas. My own access to mobile technology and appropriate concept modelling e.g. Inspiration Gold software and drawing packages such as Microsoft Visio, have given me a level of visual reflection-on-action that I have felt vital to my articulation and development of ideas. I think I had forgotten what I was taught as a student of art and design; a sketch book was a starting point that moved the artist towards your final design 'product', the sketch book showed the journey and influences which created the final product. The first paper-based sketch for me was only the starting point of an idea. I felt the need to add colour and visual metaphors, I needed to change the size of images and where possible add animation to show flow, power and

influence within relationships. Rather than just presenting a sketched rich picture I needed to present an animated rich picture (easily done through Power Point). Checkland (with others) may see the use of technology as getting in the way of the immediacy of modelling however as mobile technology has advanced I would argue that for me it has given me an added tool for visual reflection that I could not have achieved through spoken or written means, either by myself or with others. The very act of creating the animations helped me reflect on my perceptions of power and influence of the various stakeholders in my models and I do not think I could have gone into this depth with just a paper and pencil sketch. The use of visual metaphors has made me stop and think how I really perceived the various stakeholders in my research and their relationship to one another. My metaphors e.g. my own department as a series of cogs in a machine was challenged by school-based colleagues that I worked with who saw us as far less passive than my image. By using the image rather than just text there developed another layer of discussion and debate that I do not think would have started. Comments such as "I see you more as ..." gave different directions to discussions of rich pictures. Cousin (2009) writes about photo elicitation as an effective research methodology in higher education particularly if the aim is to enable research participants to have an active and collegiate input to the research process. I think that without realising it I was using elements of photo elicitation in my own use of images. If I was to take my research on power and influence further I would consider using photo elicitation to see what images colleagues would use to represent the various structures and cultures within my institution. What I have found frustrating is that after using SSM I can find few mentions of it in research methodology textbooks in education, learning and teaching or social science. When I have presented my work to education audiences there has been a great deal of interest in the methodology. The LUMAS model is often seen as particularly relevant. In my department, we undertake learning and teaching research; however, the closest methodology to SSM that is considered, is appreciative inquiry (AI). Taking the four activities that form SSM I can identify colleagues going through similar research processes but without any theoretical framework of this nature.

As a member of a staff development team even prior to undertaking my doctorate I am a practitioner/researcher. However before I began my doctorate I was ignorant of work-based learning methodologies which shocked me. One of the outcomes of my Doctorate project has been to introduce SSM to a wider audience and in particular to those in education and learning and teaching. In

September 2008 I presented my research methodology to the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER) at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. The title of my presentation was "Using developmental mentoring to embed PDP via an ePortfolio system" and was submitted under the theme of research methodology. Feedback from the conference Chair, (a Professor of Education in Sweden) and participants recognised the "considerable advantages of such a methodology to engage teachers/educators". Whilst I had no need for additional validation, it was gratifying to receive this confirmation of my choice of project methodology. Cousin (2009) when introducing AI as a research method states that AI is often used in business "but it can be of equal use for the research of educational settings". In my opinion, the same needs saying for SSM. Ironically, in SSM texts then there are case studies of SSM used in schools primarily to address management issues rather than educational ones.

Chapter 4 SSM activities leading to the design and delivery of the Pathfinder Project (2007/08)

The activities within this chapter are grouped within the four main phases of the SSM process, 1. finding out, 2. making purposeful activity models, 3. using the model for discussion and debate in the real world and 4. defining action for improvement. Within each of these main phases there are sub-sets of activities that use the various 'tools' available within SSM. These 'tools' do not always translate well into prose as SSM is not a linear process. However, to help the reader through the journey that I have been on I have tried to visualise the various elements copying the format that Checkland and Poulter use (for example, see 2006: 40). As Checkland and Poulter (2006: 14) explain SSM gives guidelines for a practitioner to follow but these do not have to be followed in a linear way and at times will loop backwards and forwards. The finding out phase is an example of this as the influences on my project have shifted and changed through its life span. This fluidity has been difficult to show within a written document as the influences happen and change over time. To make more sense I have also chunked together elements, such as Analysis 3, looking at the political issues so that they roughly follow a chronological time frame, starting from the beginning of the academic year 2005/6. I have chosen this start date as it includes the planning phase for my doctoral project and key sector-wide milestones for PDP. The project activity finishes at the end of the academic year 2008/09. My research also looks forward to potential sector-wide changes for 2010 and beyond.

As with SSM I am starting with the 'big-picture'. Following on from Analysis 3 (political), I move to Analysis 2 (social) as this developed out of semi-structured interviews with staff and finally to Analysis 1 (the intervention). My starting point is also based on the duality of being a practitioner/researcher. As a practitioner one of my roles is to be the institutional representative for the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA). In this role I receive any sector-wide information regarding PDP and then act as a conduit for this information across the wider university environment. The wider political, sector-wide issues are initially more a part of my work role than my discipline-based colleagues. In turn, I am

influential in what my colleagues receive as the central message within the University. This approach sets the scene within a socio-political-cultural context of my work environment. It also places me in a role of 'gatekeeper' of the sector-wide information related to PDP.

4.1 Finding out: The undefined issue

Checkland and Poulter (2006:23) offer four ways of finding out about a problematic situation; making Rich Pictures and carrying out three kinds of inquiry, known as 'Analyses One, Two and Three'. Though Checkland and Poulter (2006: 23-38) offer explanations of these four ways of finding out in the above order, I have found it more convenient when writing in linear prose to switch the order around. Therefore, I will address Analysis 3 first, then Analysis 2 and 1, followed by making a Rich Picture. As Checkland and Poulter (2006:158) state on the 'craft skills in SSM use',

"Try not to *impose* a structure on the situation. Rather let it 'speak to you', as you tease out the strands of thinking within it".

4.1.1 Analysis 3 (political)

In SSM the focus of Analysis 3 is, (Checkland and Poulter 2006:35)

"to find out the disposition of power in a situation and the processes for containing it" or in other words "what does or does not get done"

In a later stage of SSM this can translate into, what is feasible? As mentioned earlier, the political issues relating to PDP are important to me in my work role as they can set agendas and help decide priorities that I can then present to both the University senior management for strategy and direction as well as to discipline-based colleagues for delivery to students. Over the period of my project there have been some key sector-wide 'events' which have influenced the importance that PDP has been given. These events have greatly influenced me but have had less impact on colleagues with discipline areas.

4.1.1.1 Sector and institutional context

Chronologically I can identify my project as starting at the beginning of the academic year 2005/6. In terms of professional doctorate studies all I had done at that stage was successfully apply to the programme. However within this application I had already identified the community of practice and the institutional context for my work. I had also stated that I hoped two outcomes would be: to critically examine staff perceptions of the design and delivery of personal development planning and to explore and develop appropriate theoretical models which unpacked the interface between design and delivery and institutional policy to bring about an improved experience of personal development planning.

2005/06 was also a key year across the HE sector in terms of PDP. In section 40 of the QAA et al Guidelines (2001) the following is stated,

“Institutions are expected to develop their own PDP policies and practice within these Guidelines:

- Universities and colleges should be responsible for providing opportunities for PDP and for guidance to support the process.
- The nature, scope and extent of opportunities and support for PDP should be determined by each institution (influenced by Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies where appropriate).
- The ultimate responsibility for deriving benefit from PDP should rest with each student: although institutions will influence this.
- QAA should, through its development and review activities, support the introduction of policy and, when practice is established, be responsible for providing public assurance that institutional policies are being implemented effectively¹.

¹ Explanation

During the development phase (until 2005) institutions that are involved in the Academic Review process could signal in their self-evaluation document the progress they are making in creating opportunities for PDP. Academic Reviewers could encourage and promote this development by reporting on but not judging the practice seen. This could be an area where 'exemplary' features might be identified by reviewers. Encouragement for the development of institutional practice could also be provided through subject benchmarking”.

The explanation at the end was interpreted by most HEI's as meaning that from the start of the academic year 2005/06 institutions could be judged on their provision during quality audits. This understanding was universally held by those who attended the CRA seminar events during 2002/03/04 and even into 2005. It was only as the academic year 2005/06 began that clarification was given by QAA that there would be no judgement of an institution's PDP provision. The context at the start of my project thus was one in which PDP had a high profile and high priority for many HEI's. However, over the life span of my project this has waned. In practical terms I have observed the reduction of posts specifically created to implement PDP. At an ePortfolio/PDP event in April 2010 four of the delegates with PDP in the role titles were either being made redundant or were being redeployed.

By the start of 2005/06 my University had already embedded its response to the QAA *et al* guidelines (2001) by locating PDP within the Institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy 2002-05 with a one year extension for 2005/06. The strategy aimed to:

“Develop the quality, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of our learning environment, so as to enhance the educational experience of students across the whole institution”.

It had three main priorities:

Staff: to develop our intellectually responsive learning community
Students: to develop the independent learner
Technology: to develop the interactive learning environment

Although PDP is not explicitly mentioned our understanding of developing an independent learner would have to include a PDP process. This view is also one that the QAA *et al* (2001: point 35) offer,

“PDP will help academic staff:

- by helping students to be more independent/autonomous learners;
- improve the quality of experience for tutors and tutees when it is linked to personal tutoring systems;
- make more effective use of off-campus opportunities for learning like work placements or study abroad;

- by creating a mechanism through which career-related skills and capabilities can be recorded;
- by improving their understanding of the development of individual students and their ability to provide more meaningful employment references on their behalf”.

In my opinion, a key factor in promoting institutional delivery of the Learning and Teaching Strategy was that it required ring-fenced funding. This funding primarily allowed the creation of fractional School-based Co-ordinators. Each co-ordinator was a discipline specialist with an additional role linked to learning and teaching. The fractional appointments included a responsibility to engage with the central department that I worked for. This created the Learning and Teaching Holon of like-minded people from different disciplines who were brought together to operationalise the strategy within their own disciplines. For the School-based Student Development and Support (SDS) Co-ordinators and myself this related specifically to the student priorities. During 2005/06 a new Learning and Teaching Strategy for the period 2006-2010 was developed that set out the following main aim:

“to embed the quality, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of our learning environments into the mainstream processes and procedures of university planning and implementation, so to enhance the lives, the educational experience and employability of our students”

To achieve this there were two strategic priorities, one aimed at the student experience and the other at staff expertise:

“STUDENTS: Strategic Priority One: To enable our diverse students to access and achieve a set of understandings, skills and personal attributes which will enhance their achievement and employability.

STAFF: Strategic Priority Two: To enable our staff to develop their learning and teaching expertise in order to enhance the student learning experience”

Whilst PDP is not mentioned explicitly the PDP process supports the access and achievement of the stated aims. The institution has a PDP framework - PACE (Figure 8: 36) and it has an implementation strategy. The context of my project is therefore based on supporting discipline-based staff who are the ones who

ultimately put any policy or practice into the real life learning and teaching environment. It could be argued that by having a strategy in place the notion of academic freedom is curtailed. However, as a large and diverse institution one of our concerns expressed in such places as the Student Affairs Committee is that there remains an inconsistency between student experiences. A strategic approach within my context is seen as setting a minimum standard that all students should expect.

Over the time of my project there have been other key developments at sector level. It was anticipated that during 2006/7 the QAA *et al* policy statement (2000) would go through a consultation and review process with key stakeholders. In the CRA residential 2007 a representative from QAA asked for feedback from delegates. There was an appeal from delegates that QAA *et al* should not water-down any comments regarding institutional responsibilities and potential consequences. This will be picked up again in Chapter 5 Project findings and analysis: 138. While the consultations were taking place I was involved in key SSM stages such as conceptual modelling and real world comparisons.

My project finishes at a time when the HE sector should have been implementing the new Higher Education Achievement Reports (HEAR's). During my project an initial 18 HEI's across the UK piloted HEAR's. These included a full range of institutional backgrounds, size and focus. From these pilots it was expected that guidelines would be circulated. In 2009 this number grew to 30 HEI's however there has yet to be any indications from these pilots as to what a sector-wide policy might look like.

4.1.2 Analysis 2 (social)

As discussed earlier, Analysis 2 looks at where any intervention is to take place. This refers to the issues of concepts of desirability and feasibility as key, as no matter what is suggested as an intervention, it has to align with the setting in which it is positioned. Checkland and Poulter (2006: 33-34) use the elements of roles, norms and values as mentioned previously, To capture these elements through the life span of the project Checkland and Poulter (2006: 34-35) suggest opening a file that records each interaction within the situation being researched and after each interaction the roles, norms and values encountered

are reviewed. This would carry on through the life span of the research.

Roles: At the start of my project, key actors were the SDS Co-ordinators, members of the Learning and Teaching Holon, PDP champions and the ePortfolio Users Group (ePUG) that I had been working with. Some were members of two or three groups but had different (though interacting) roles depending on how they saw their roles in each group. For example, they might operationalise their school's learning and teaching strategy, develop innovative pedagogies and be a champion and early adopter of the ePortfolio system. By the end of my project the roles expressed were those of mentor and mentee with an identity as part of the Pathfinder Project. My own role became that of a senior advisor but my role did not stop with the Pathfinder rather it changed to concentrate on being a practitioner/researcher writing up what had occurred. This last role has been the most challenging to-date.

Norms: The behaviour of the mentors is an area that I took particular note of as I observed practice at the three retreats. What I observed surprised me and caused me to reflect upon different perceptions of the mentoring relationship and what that meant to participants. This forms part of the discussion in section 5.2 Developmental mentoring in a wider debate: 141.

Values: Within my project the standards on which I have based the evaluation of the roles and norms, are formulated on Megginson *et al's* characteristics of developmental mentoring (Table 2: 55). Given that this compares sponsorship versus developmental mentoring, I have two contrasting criteria. It is true that these three elements changed over time; less so the norms, the roles greatly and the values I recorded more for reflection-on and for-action.

4.1.2.1 Semi-structured interviews with staff

In October 2006 I conducted 19 semi-structured interviews with staff who were all involved in some way with the delivery of PDP activity to students at Wolverhampton. The interviews were based on the following research questions concentrating on attitudes, beliefs and perceptions on PDP:

1. What do staff and students perceive as PDP?
2. What are the definitions of PDP within the HE sector?
3. How are members of staff engaging in PDP? (for themselves and for their learning and teaching)
4. How are students engaging in PDP?
5. What is the level of engagement?
6. Are there rewards for this engagement?
7. What is the perceived impact of rewards on motivation?

All the staff interviewed were self-selecting however I did select the groups who would be contacted. An email was sent to all the SDS Co-ordinators, members of the ePUG, key members of the CETL and Departments that were perceived as being relevant by me to the deliver of PDP activities (The Student Union, Careers and Employment Service, Active Volunteers). These groups were selected as they already had some experience of both staff and student PDP activity. Therefore they would all have some view on what that activity could be defined as, why they had used it and what they perceived were the issues relating to motivation and engagement.

I had positive responses to my request for interviews from 24 staff out of the 34 who were sent the email message, eventually interviewing 19 people. At the start of each interview the interviewees were given a handout to explain my research and the methodology. I then confirmed that they were comfortable with being recorded, offering them a copy of the resulting sound file. The interviews were conducted as semi-structured conversations based on the questions previously sent. Throughout the interview if something was mentioned that I thought was particularly relevant or needed more explanation I picked up on that and asked for more details. Once my key questions had been answered I asked two additional questions,

1. "If you had a magic wand what would you do to motivate staff to engage in PDP?"
2. "If you had a magic wand what would you do to motivate students to engage in PDP?"

These two questions gave some very important information. Finally I asked if the interviewee had anything additional that they would like to add, again eliciting some interesting responses. The interviews ranged from 13 to 46 minutes.

During the interviews I became very conscious of the relationship between myself and each interviewee. At the start of the interviews I set the scene relating the interview to my own research rather than for any research-related work within my professional role. Interviewees were concerned that any comments made were not identified to them unless they stated otherwise. It was important to make the distinction between my role as a practitioner/researcher and as a representative of a central department. It was vital to outline the use of SSM at the finding out stage so that interviewees felt that what they had to say would have some influence and impact particularly in any direction and activities that would come out of this first stage.

From the interviews the following beliefs and values were expressed:

- All staff believed that students would not engage in PDP unless it was assessed in some way

“... most of my students have come to HE for some kind of life changing event, they know what they want and what they expect to be taught. If they can’t see something going towards their degree then they won’t do it, it’s as simple as that”. (E)

“I can go blue in the face telling them that this is good for them, but unless it is assessed you get those who would do it any way taking part and those who really need it not bothering”. (B)

“My student have no option they have to do PDP as part of their professional practice”. (A)

“Our students won’t see PDP as being anything to do with [the subject] so unless it was assessed it wouldn’t happen I think most of my colleagues have the same view as my students”. (C)

- All said that students must see a value and a benefit for doing PDP activities

“PDP has to be in the context of [the subject], we do it but not necessarily label it as such. We’ve tried different approaches and have always found that students hate anything that they see as

'soft skills' ... you know what I mean study skills and the like ... talk about the skills needed for this job or that, then they can see a relevance but it's still a very difficult area to sell to them. Ironically after they leave they talk less about the content and more about the other things they learnt, they just can't see it while they are here". (F)

"It's a subject requirement, we don't have a problem as students know they have to reflect on their practice all through their future career". (I)

"PDP is not something that my students see as relevant to start with but I make sure they realise that if they want to get a job at the end of their course, it's a process that's really important for them to do. Using technology to do it has helped as I can make seem like a relevant activity – make your own web site – that helps". (D)

"If you look at our NSS scores we always come out well for personal development I think it says a lot about what we do at the Uni. I would hate to see PDP becoming central or something outside of the curriculum as students just won't see the connection" (E)

- All said that 'time' was a factor for not doing their own PDP

"I think we all reflect on our teaching as we want the students to learn but there is a difference that is very pragmatic between reflecting in action and reflecting on action. As a course team we probably do more reflection at the end of term when we have some time once the students have left, to see what worked and what didn't, but during the term its much more 'fire fighting'. (F)

"I wonder how many of us see our SMSA [self managed scholarly activity] as PDP?". (E)

"Well I have been doing it because of my course and have enjoyed it but that's because I have had to make time. I think all of us do

reflect on what went well and what didn't in our teaching but then you have to move on to the next task." (D)

- All said that the University should value PDP more than it did at that point.

"I really wish 'management' would give some thought to our CPD we're asked once a year what are training needs are and what helped or hindered us reaching our objectives but that's it". (I)

"It's OK us flogging the idea of PDP to our students and that's a good thing but what about us. I think you once used a quote from the QAA that said something like ... students will value PDP more if they see they teachers do it ... where and when is this supposed to happen? And who would take any notice of it anyway?" (E)

- All said that the University should recognise PDP and CPD activity for staff which participants did not perceive as happening at that time.

"The PG Cert was the only time that I felt any value was placed on PDP and I really enjoyed doing it, but apart from that then its just back to annual appraisal". (B)

"I can't remember but I don't think CPD or PDP comes under any work load allocation heading? If it doesn't then it gets no time as I have so many other priorities". (D)

- All said the PDP should be for professional development more than or in addition to Personal development

"We call our module 'professional and personal development' and that changes both colleague and student perceptions. Adding the term 'professional seems to make it easier to see the link for both [discipline-based staff and students] to what they see as 'content' modules". (A)

"There's a different view if its seen as being link to the profession and the professional body, we've used the HEA employability

profile in the first year as a way of showing the student what the profession will expect of them when they leave this has helped". (B)

- All made a distinction between PDP and reflective learning and practice. However all say PDP should have reflection in it.

"My student have to keep folders of evidence but without reflecting on what they have learnt from those experiences then they just become like the old 'red menus', you know the records of achievement that students very proudly show you at interview but were meaningless as they just had certificates in with no meaning." (I)

"I don't think you can have PDP without reflection but you can't just have reflection as that can become navel gazing there has to be some direction and action". (C)

"What's the point of PDP without reflection? You have to make sense of what you have done, you have to tell the story particularly if, as I believe, PDP is used to tell others what you have done and learnt by the activity". (F)

- All thought reflection was difficult for students to do

"The first thing I am asked is 'what's a good piece of reflection?' I use Jenny Moon's examples as students can see the difference much more easily". (B)

"In [subject] we are constantly telling them, don't use 'I', don't use emotional language, you must reference, be professional, keep it objective ... and then say 'write a reflection' ..., no wonder they think it's hard". (J)

"I heard a colleague introduce some reflective writing the one time and they said, 'I want a 500 word reflection, fully referenced using Harvard' I had a stream of students at my door after the session in a real panic as they had no idea what to do". (G)

- Where there was a professional requirement then staff undertook their own PDP but there was some scepticism about the level of engagement.

“I have to do it to be registered but there is a difference between doing the minimum and doing a good job. It’s a matter of time and priorities”. (A)

“The last piece of reflective writing I did was for my HEA application, which I got but I’ve never had to do anything again or show any kind of progression. I did enjoy it in a kind of strange way as we were all being encouraged to join so were given some time and space to do it. At the time there was some kudos in getting your membership but this has waned as there is no follow up”. (J)

The interviews and follow-up discussions raised real issues around CPD which I felt that I did not have the status or role to generate an appropriate transformation. This was not to say that I could not encourage CPD to take place but rather that I had no institutional reputation or mandate that could change any formal structures or policies.

The interviews also highlighted a unanimous view that our students would not undertake PDP activities unless they were delivered in the taught curriculum, and assessed in some way. This immediately changed my initial project proposal which suggested looking at extrinsic and intrinsic motivation for student engagement.

Following on from the interviews, I facilitated group discussions from which I took notes to try to gauge different world views (Figure 18: 105) that I expected each group would have relating to PDP and the ePortfolio. The group discussions were conducted at the ends of ‘events’ that brought together different groups of participants (indicated in bold), for example, after an ePortfolio Users Group (ePUG) or at the end of a Learning and Teaching committee. This was not ideal as people were already focused on the topic that the committee had been addressing but it was practical as it brought together people who were normally difficult to get hold of in one group due to such things as working at different campuses and having varied teaching time-tables.

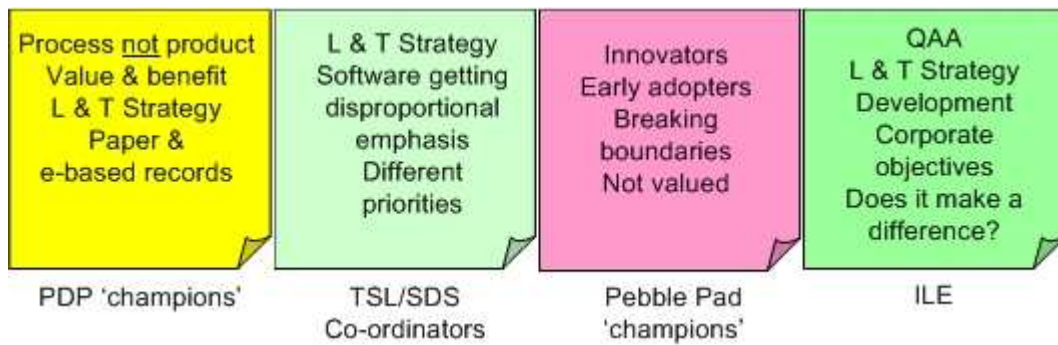


Figure 18 Different worldviews

With my colleagues in ILE I had one-to-one discussions. During the discussions, I was aware of the different dynamics within the groups. In all groups there were dominant speakers that I expected to hear from as I had already considerable experience of working with these people. I also knew that I would have to act as a facilitator rather than just as a note taker to make sure that all views were able to be expressed.

Cousin, (2009: 52) suggests,

“The use of the term ‘moderator’ rather than interviewer for focus group research provides a reminder that the researcher role is to prompt and facilitate discussion rather than to control them”.

From the discussions I summarised my perceptions and where possible offered them to the group for a negotiated understanding and meaning. The different world views showed some real conflicts between how people perceived their work, for example the ePortfolio champions saw themselves as the real innovators, and how different groups perceived others, for example the TSL co-ordinators thought that the software was receiving disproportional emphasis in particular by the champions, which is not surprising. One of the main areas of conflict was articulated as process rather than product.

Those who were involved in the delivery of the learning and teaching strategy were more concerned with PDP processes and activities. They did not really mind what software or paper-based system was used. The champions saw themselves as pushing boundaries but also felt that their work was not recognised or valued internally. Some even went as far as suggesting that those in ‘established’ roles were blocking their work. The one constant in all the different worldviews was

that no one questioned the value and benefit to student learning of engagement with PDP activities.

4.1.2.2 Critical incidents

During the academic years 2005/6 and 2006/7 I was asked by a number of academic schools to support their use of PebblePad© and therefore by association, PDP processes. By working with colleagues I was able to observe how 'PDP' as a concept was introduced to students. From the observations I created critical incident journal entries. These concentrated on issues which seemed to make some impact on student engagement with PDP. The entries were for my own reflection as I was very concerned about the ethical issues of being a practitioner/researcher in a privileged position of being invited in by colleague to support their teaching. From those observations key themes/issues emerged.

1. Did staff make PDP relevant to the student's own learning and development?
2. Did staff contextualize PDP?
3. Were students given clear guidelines about what was expected of them? in relation to:
 - tasks set
 - assessment criteria
 - appropriate writing styles
 - expectations of how they were to use any 'tool' e.g. PebblePad©
4. Were students taught how to use any 'tools'?

My reflections on the critical incidents also highlighted how I was perceived by colleagues. In some instances I was introduced as the 'expert' in PDP in others the 'expert' in the use of PebblePad©. Students often saw me as just another lecturer. There was a vast difference in the use that I was put to, ranging from booking me to run one-off workshops being introduced by the lecturer who sometimes then left me with their students while they went off to do other things. At the other end of the scale, I was asked to join a curriculum planning team and then to team-teach for the whole of a module and provide moderation on assessment over four iterations of the same module. The area where I had most impact was the latter as I was able to make sure that ownership and

capability in delivering an effective PDP process stayed with the academic school. Reflecting on my role in these situations led me to the view that I was most effective when acting more as a mentor rather than as a facilitator, demonstrator or co-ordinator.

After the interviews and discussion I constructed my first rich picture, this is not to say that I hadn't visualised what I was seeing and hearing as I went along but these early images though understandable to me would have needed a great deal of interpretation for others to gain meaning from them. I created a rich picture (Figure 19: 108) that I was happy to share with colleagues once I thought I had reached the stage in the finding out process which could offer some different thoughts and directions to proceed to the next step. I used conventions as outlined previously of crossed swords and clocks and symbols such as chess pieces for senior management.

4.1.3 Making rich pictures

One of the influences on my rich picture and upon the attitudes of people that I spoke to, are the QAA *et al* Guidelines for HE Progress File (2001). At no point that I can recall at any of the CRA events I attended did anyone ever challenge or ask for evidence of the statements made regarding the value and benefit of PDP, we just accepted them as valid. For example (QAA *et al* 2001: 13),

“PDP is likely to be most effective when it is:

- a mainstream academic activity ...”

There is evidence that practice across the sector in reality, interprets these statements differently. For example, within a number of older Universities have set up separate awards such as, 'the York Award', which take PDP activities out of the curriculum and put them into a separate, optional course.

I interviewed teaching staff from the satellite groups I identified in Figure 3: 20 to help me construct my initial rich picture (Figure 19: 108). This complex set of formal and informal groups, from the mix of different discipline backgrounds, learning cultures and communities became the participant context for my project.

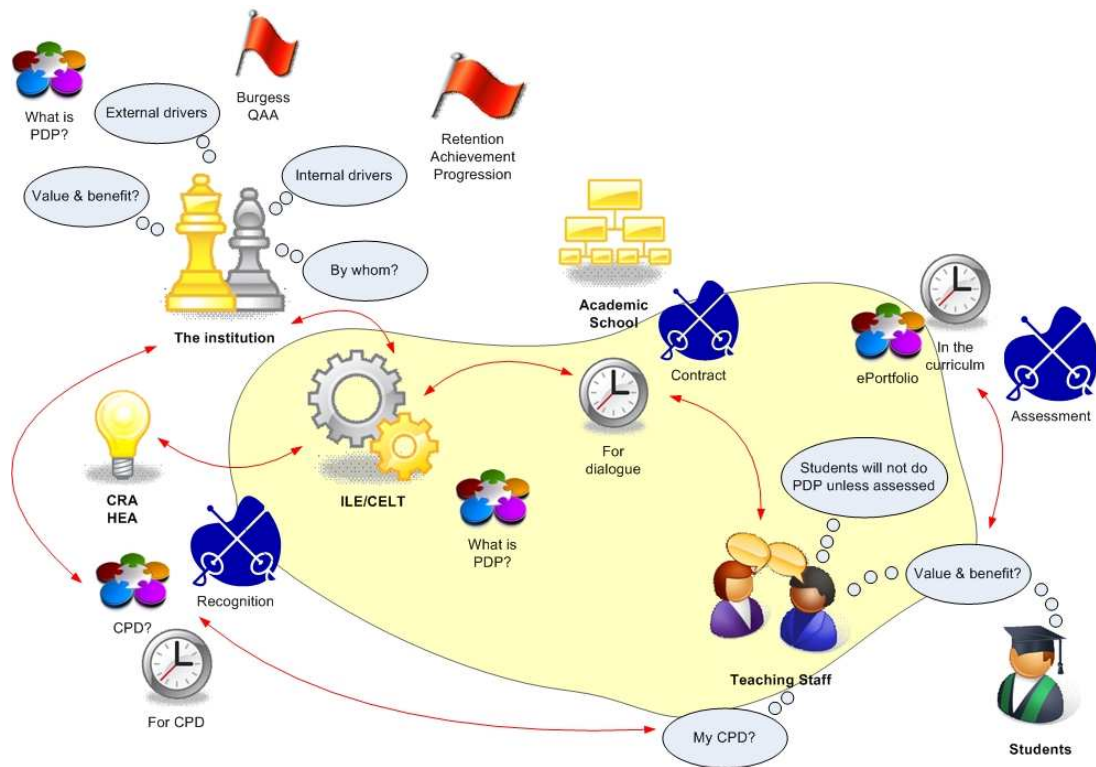


Figure 19 My shared rich picture

Within the structure of my rich picture I identified that sector-wide initiatives frequently enter the institution via the University Executive. These then are cascaded down either into the Academic Schools through the Deans' group or if related to learning and teaching, into ILE. From ILE, then into the Academic Schools through the appropriate ILE co-ordinator and School Learning and Teaching Teams.

The development of this rich picture helped me to realise that some of the areas I was still considering were not appropriate for me to try to instigate change within. The first area that I rejected as impractical, as mentioned previously, looking at the assessment of PDP. All staff interviewed strongly believed that students would not do PDP unless it was an assessed activity. I did not think, at the stage of the implementation of PDP activities we were trying to embed, that a change of policy or strategic direction would help.

As a Central Department criticism is sometimes levelled at us is that we are not in touch with the student population as we do not regularly teach undergraduates. I understood this view as I had felt the same when I was a

divisional head and subject leader. I would have resented a change of strategic direction that challenged my knowledge of my student cohorts (Becher and Trowler 2001, Trowler, 1998). The view that PDP is better placed within the mainstream academic provision is also backed up by the QAA *et al* (2001: 47).

The second area that I considered not appropriate for change, related to staff engaging in their own continuing professional development (CPD). In some subject areas such as those relating to health and teacher education, there are annually reviewed professional body requirements to keep professional development portfolios. In the discipline or profession of being a 'teacher in higher education' there is no professional body, the closest entities to a professional body being the Higher Education Academy (HEA) or the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA). The Higher Education Academy states that their mission is: to support the sector in providing the best possible learning experience for all students. Their strategic aims are to:

1. Identify, develop and disseminate evidence-informed approaches,
2. Broker and encourage the sharing of effective practice,
3. Support universities and colleges in bringing about strategic change,
4. Inform, influence and interpret policy,
5. Raise the status of teaching.

The HEA has three levels of membership Associate of the HEA (AHEA), Fellow of the HEA (FHEA) and Senior Fellow of the HEA (SFHEA). Membership can be awarded by undertaking recognized training or by application. The application is by a reflective account of six main areas. Once membership has been granted there is no requirement for continuing professional development.

In February 2006 the HEA launched a Professional Standards framework (UK PSF) on behalf of Universities UK (UUK), GuildHE and the four UK higher education funding councils for England Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The UK PSF for Teaching and Supporting Learning (2006: 2), aims to act as,

- “• an enabling mechanism to support the professional development of staff engaged in supporting learning
- a means by which professional approaches to supporting student learning can be fostered through creativity, innovation and

continuous development

- a means of demonstrating to students and other stakeholders the professionalism that staff bring to the support of the student learning experience
- a means to support consistency and quality of the student learning experience”.

It promotes itself as

“... a flexible framework which uses a descriptor-based approach to professional standards”.

The PSF is based on three descriptors HE institutions are supposed to then determine their own criteria when applying those descriptors. This assumes that an institution has a process and procedures that can operate in this way. So that the descriptors can be evidenced the PSF also offers six areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values that already exist and that form the basis for application to the HEA. Again there is an assumption that these would be applied to relevant activities within an institution’s own professional development programmes.

The three standard descriptors (2006: 3) are:

1. Demonstrates an understanding of the student learning experience through engagement with at least 2 of the 6 areas of activity, appropriate core knowledge and professional values; the ability to engage in practices related to those areas of activity; the ability to incorporate research, scholarship and/or professional practice into those activities
2. Demonstrates an understanding of the student learning experience through engagement with all areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values; the ability to engage in practices related to all areas of activity; the ability to incorporate research, scholarship and/or professional practice into those activities

3. Supports and promotes student learning in all areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values through mentoring and leading individuals and/or teams; incorporates research, scholarship and/or professional practice into those activities

The activities and core knowledge and values that are set out within the statement (2006: 4) are:

Areas of activity:

1. Design and planning of learning activities and/or programmes of study
2. Teaching and/or supporting student learning
3. Assessment and giving feedback to learners
4. Developing effective environments and student support and guidance
5. Integration of scholarship, research and professional activities with teaching and supporting learning
6. Evaluation of practice and continuing professional development

Core knowledge: Knowledge and understanding of:

1. The subject material
2. Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme
3. How students learn, both generally and in the subject
4. The use of appropriate learning technologies
5. Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching
6. The implications of quality assurance and enhancement for professional practice

Professional values:

1. Respect for individual learners
2. Commitment to incorporating the process and outcomes of relevant research, scholarship and/or professional practice
3. Commitment to development of learning communities
4. Commitment to encouraging participation in higher education, acknowledging diversity and promoting equality of opportunity
5. Commitment to continuing professional development and evaluation of practice

These standards are, I think, quite impressive and well thought out. However I am unaware of any formal implementation of them in any way within the sector. That is not to say that many people working in HE do not already act in a professional manner described within this framework.

SEDA's main aim is to promote innovation and good practice in higher education. It states it is committed to improving all aspects of learning, teaching and training in higher education through staff and educational development. One of its core mission objectives to do this is that: SEDA will help all its members, whether staff and educational developers, teachers or learning staff, to enhance, the quality of their capabilities in supporting learning. SEDA does have a professional development framework which includes 16 named awards (September 2008) however there is no national recognition of these being sector-wide standards or benchmarks. The named awards are institution based and not available directly for individuals.

Neither organisation offers any professional body recognition for staff CDP which staff expressed as desirable for motivating them to engage with P/CDP activities.

I did consider whether I could work with our personnel department to develop internal staff CPD and PDP. However, just after the start of my project the University started a full Higher Education Role Analysis HERA review of all posts as part of a major pay modernization scheme. This meant that the institutional climate was not the best to start working in an area that could be interpreted as being linked to what became quite a painful process for some.

Overall the area where it seemed that I could make the most difference was in building capability and therefore capacity in staff ability and confidence in engaging in PDP activities with their students.

4.1.4 Analysis 1 (the intervention)

Whilst this might seem to be in the wrong order I feel that I can not discuss the intervention without considering those people that could be affected by it or the political issues that would influence it. Checkland and Poulter (2006: 28) highlight three key roles that are always present in an SSM process:

“1. There was some person (or group of persons) who had *caused the intervention to happen*, someone without whom there would be no investigation at all - this was the role ‘client’.

2. There was some person (or group of persons) who were *conducting the investigation* - this was the role ‘practitioner’.

3. Most importantly, whoever was in the practitioner role could chose, and list, a number of people who could be regarded as being *concerned about or affected by the situation and the outcome* of the effort to improve it - this was the role ‘owner of the issue(s) addressed’.

Roles are identified, rather than people as a person may hold one or more roles. In my project I caused the investigation to happen so I am the ‘client’. I am conducting the research so I am the ‘practitioner’ and could be affected by any changes for improvement so I am also one of the ‘owners’. In addition to myself, I presented my Learning Contract to my line-manager – The Dean for Learning and Teaching, the Director of the Centre for Recording Achievement and tutors at Middlesex University. They all agreed that my proposal was a legitimate topic for research. They are also my ‘clients’. Each client though has a different requirement related to his or her own needs and cultural contexts.

I chose my research methodology carefully to include collaboration with colleagues. Though I am the one conducting the research, the ‘practitioner’, at times I am also the conduit for others’ views. This becomes particularly important when considering cultural desirability and feasibility. I am still the main ‘practitioner’ but with guidance and input from other stakeholders. Finally as the practitioner my list of those who could be directly affected by the intervention would include, members of ILE, discipline-based teaching staff and ultimately students.

There is a different ‘layer’ of influence which is two-way. For example teaching staff are affected by their students both formally through external surveys such as the National Student Survey and internally by such things as module evaluation questionnaires (MEQ’s). ILE are asked to act if results from these indicate issues relating to learning and teaching. Seen from the other direction, ILE can also be asked to become involved with sector-wide issues and to work with teaching staff to deliver and implement elements with their students

through the taught curriculum. Potential improvements therefore can cascade from ILE to students via teaching staff and visa versa.

4.2 Making purposeful activity models

The next phase in SSM is not linear and does not lend itself to prose. Checkland and Poulter (2006: 40) offer a visual representation of the process and tools that can be used to develop a purposeful activity model. I have used Checkland and Poulter's structure and their comments (*blue italics*) adding my own experience in Figure 19 : 115.

What is presented happened in a far messier and tangled way but gives the reader some insight into various elements that I went through to ultimately come up with a model. I have tried to break down each of the various elements to help the reader interpret the various parts but they are at best subsections of a whole process.

Commenting on the 'craft skills' in SSM use Checkland and Poulter (2006:155-156) say,

"What we *are* claiming is that with experience the user of SSM will both find a way of using the methodology that they are personally comfortable with (which fits with their cast of mind) *and* improve their use of SSM as experience accumulates.

By drawing the map of the finding out phase, I reflected on and was able to capture some of the thinking that I had gone through but had not articulated at the time. The potential intervention that I identified for modelling was something that I thought could satisfy all key stakeholders.

The image in Figure 19: 115 is a very 'clean' and logical account of something that came out of a far more chaotic and jumbled thought process.

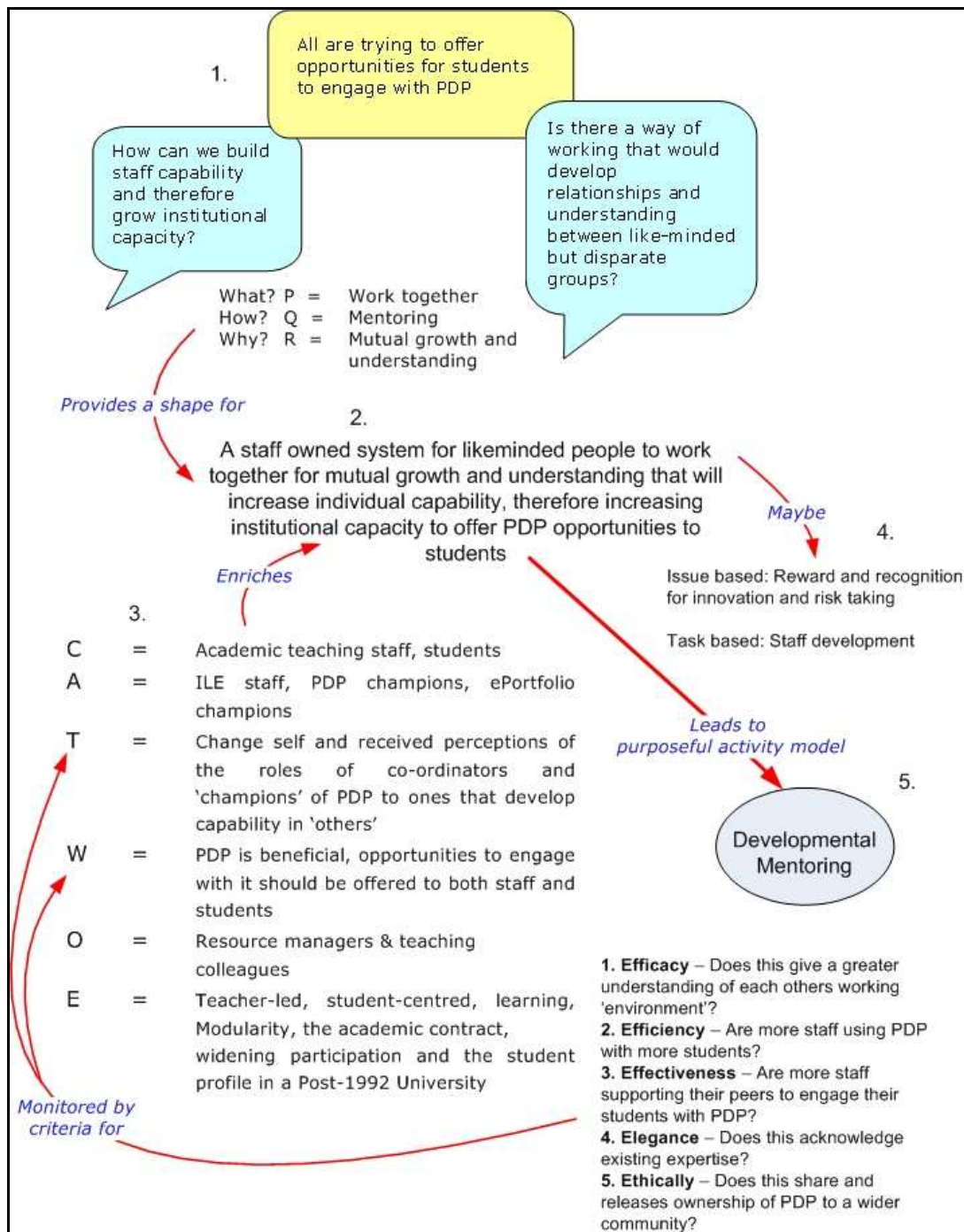


Figure 20 Using Checkland and Poulter's guidelines (2006: 40)

To try to explain how this model came to give me the root definition that led to the concept model. I have now broken down the various elements and will discuss how they interact with each other.

4.2.1 My starting point, the PQR formula shaping the root definition

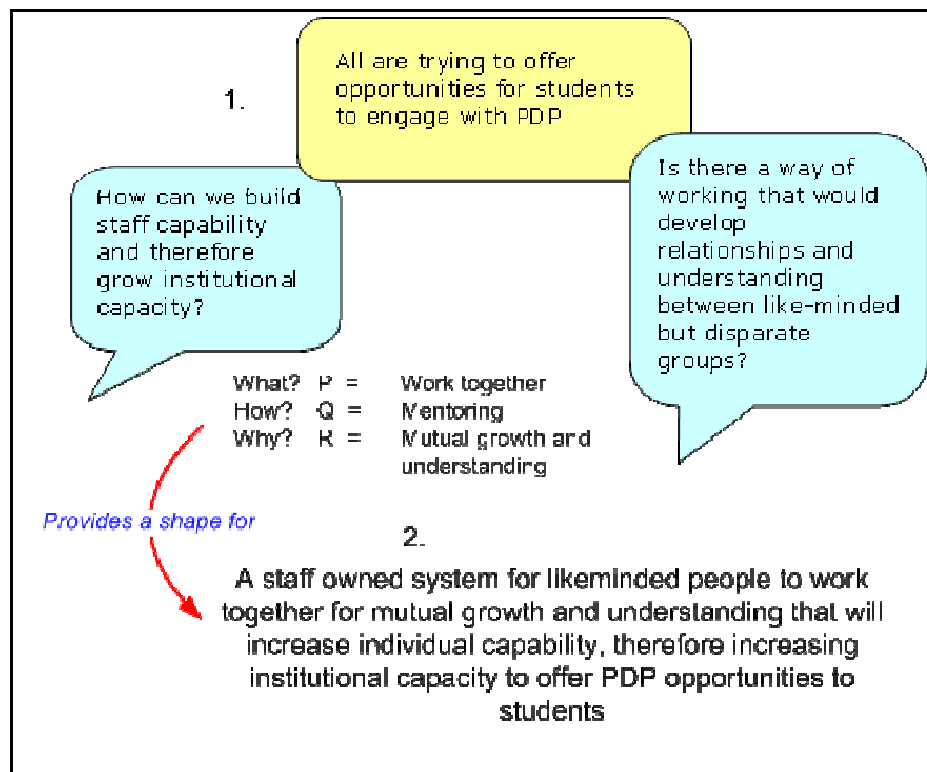


Figure 21 Starting point, the PQR formula shaping the root definition

My declared worldview was that all participants are trying to offer opportunities for students to engage with PDP. As the use of the ePortfolio system grew this worldview had an amendment. These opportunities were now able to be facilitated by an ePortfolio system. This became more important as funding for ePortfolio development was available but not for just PDP; PDP via an ePortfolio was perfect - ePDP.

The ePortfolio development created a need to build staff capability not just in the use of the software but in how ePDP could be delivered effectively within a taught curriculum. This was being explored by a few champions but for some teaching staff their practice was respected but not seen as transferable or scalable. How could these ePortfolio champions and those who were already engaged in PDP be brought together? And was the role for ILE to broker a greater understanding of the issues that could lead to mutual growth for all? The identification of the 'what', 'how' and 'why' of the P, Q, R formula helped give

me a 'character' for the root definition statement and helped focus the area of potential change for improvement (Figure 21: 116).

4.2.2 CATWOE, and 5 'E's

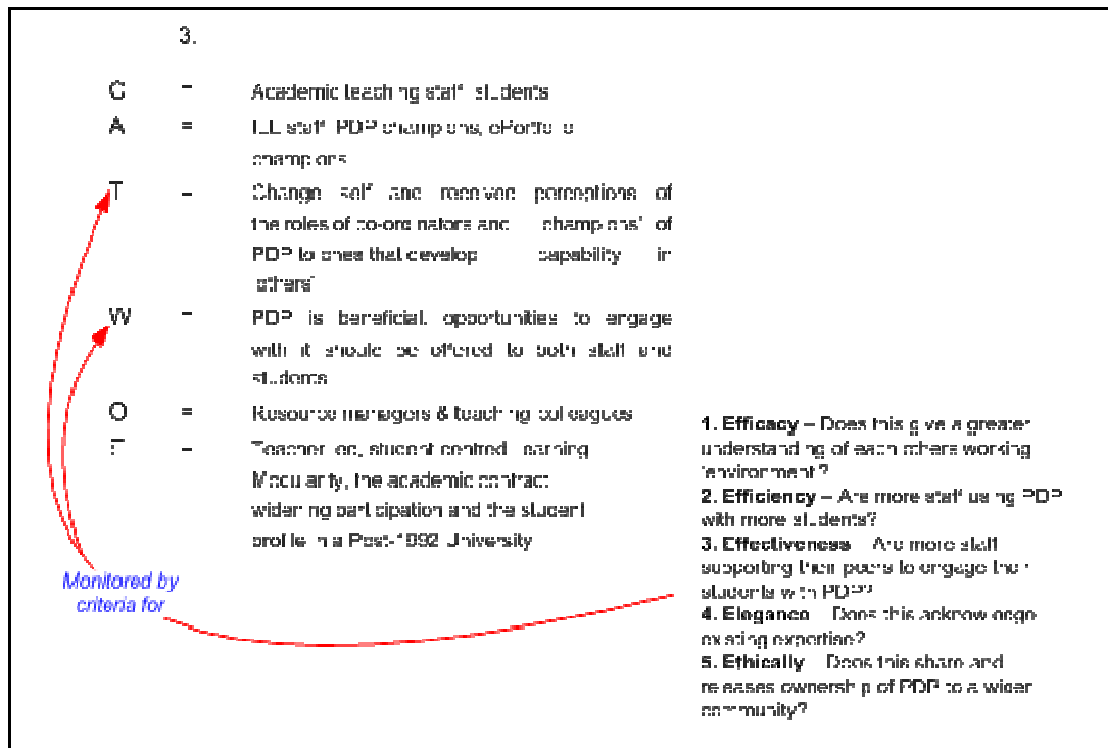


Figure 22 CATWOE, and 5 'E's

The mnemonic 'CATWOE' helps identify the key players in the investigation. CATWOE uses the terms 'client' and 'owner' in a different way to Analysis 1.

Checkland and Poulter (2006:40) define the elements of the CATWOE as:

- | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Clients (C) | = | customers, victims or beneficiaries of the transformation (T) |
| Actors (A) | = | those who do (T) |
| Transformation (T) | = | the transformation |
| Worldview (W) | = | different world views |
| Owners (O) | = | those who could stop or change the direction of (T) |
| Environment (E) | = | givens, constraints outside of E |

As my project has moved through its lifespan there have been changes in the environment as outline in Analysis 3.

Checkland and Poulter (2006: 40) state that the transformation process based on the worldview should be monitored by criteria – the 3, 4, or 5 'E's. In my project I used the five 'E's, as shown above, as I felt that I needed to find a transformation that would build understanding and create a community of practice (Figure 22: 117).

4.2.3 Leading towards a 'primary task' or 'issue based' definition

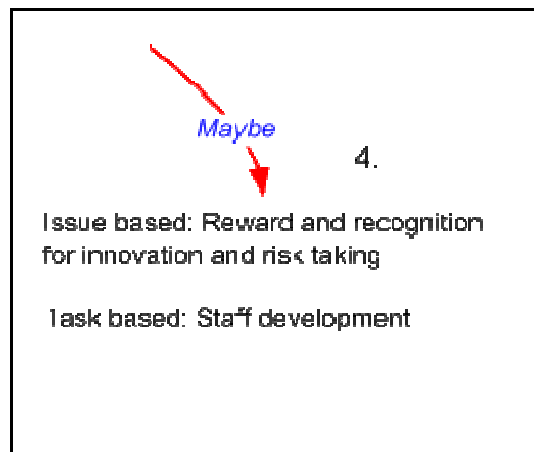


Figure 23 Primary task or issue based definitions

Checkland and Poulter (2006:43) state that the final consideration in developing a root definition should concern the root definition as a whole, is it 'primary task' or 'issue base' or a mix of both? Checkland and Poulter (2006: 44) state that,

"The general rule is: never work exclusively with either Primary task or Issue based root definitions."

Issue based definitions are those that cut across organisational boundaries. In my project I have identified this as being: Reward and recognition for innovation and risk taking. Checkland and Poulter (2006: 44) say of issue based models and root definitions,

“When such models are used to ask questions in the situation, interest and attention are always increased.”

As my project model is relevant to both academic schools and departments then this would generate interest and debate outside of any discipline-specific context but within both institutional and personal contexts and experiences.

As I am the client and practitioner for this research then I have identified the task-based definition as being: Staff development. Other participants may have different views of the task that could be addressed but as staff development for learning and teaching is one on the key functions of my department this is what I have identified.

I see an elegance and synergy between something that can help with staff development while recognising and rewarding innovation and risk taking. The root definition that evolved addresses both these concerns (Figure 23: 118).

4.2.4 Towards a model of developmental mentoring

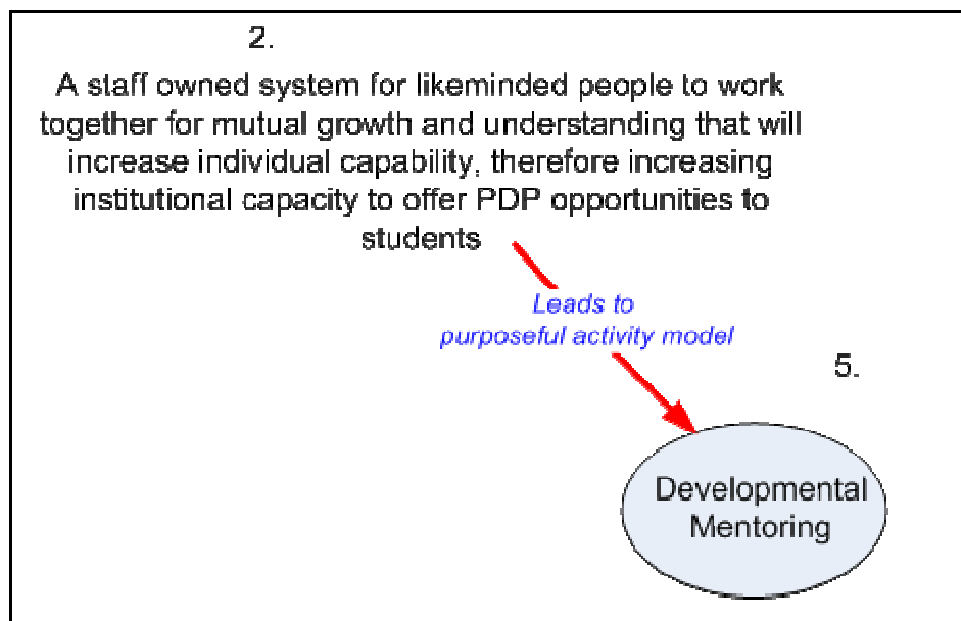


Figure 24 From the root definition towards developmental mentoring

From the root definition (Figure 24: 119), my thoughts turned to reflection as an activity that was more effective when conducted with others (Brockbank and McGill 1998, Cowan 2006) and I started to look at the concept of mentoring. A model that seemed to address the issues identified in my finding out phase and that offered what I thought might be a change for improvement was 'developmental mentoring' (Megginson *et al* 2006). Megginson *et al* offered a table (Table 2: 55) that compared sponsorship to developmental mentoring. When looking at the characteristics of developmental mentoring I saw that the characteristics might offer a model that could be adapted for my root definition. Though the developmental mentoring model offered a potential change for improvement I could not embrace all the aspects of a formal mentoring relationship. In the SSM process these issues could come under real world comparisons and defining action for improvement this will be discussed further in section 5.2 Developmental mentoring in a wider debate: 141.

In addition to the characteristics of development mentoring I also liked the five stages that the mentoring relationship went through (Megginson *et al* 2006: 19-20):

1. Rapport building
2. Setting direction
3. Progression
4. Winding up
5. Moving on

In previous staff development situations we had not really looked at the life cycle of the staff development process. I could see that I could use these stages though not necessarily as outlined by Megginson *et al*. I could also see that potentially the stages could give a different aim to each staff development event, based on these stages.

While investigating how I might suggest that developmental mentoring could be used within our learning and teaching culture a funding opportunity arose that would allow me to develop this concept in a real world setting. In 2006 the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) put out a call via the HEA for phase 2 of their Pathfinder programme.

Derek Morrison (2006), project director defined the initiative as:

“... Pathfinder is, e.g. One that discovers a new course or way, especially through or into unexplored regions. Or [...] Someone who can find paths through unexplored territory (*syn: Scout, Guide*) So there in essence we have it; those taking part in the Pathfinder Programme are intended to light the way so that the rest of us have a more comfortable and even safer journey when we begin to navigate the same routes. ...

The focus [...] is on the design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of transformation processes and activities which are intended to lead, ultimately, to the full and effective embedding of e-learning into the learning and teaching processes of the entire institution, i.e. the aim is long term change and not just short-term innovation.”

The timing of the call to submit a proposal to this initiative came at a perfect time for my project as I was able to offer the conceptual model of using developmental mentoring to build capability and therefore increase institutional capacity in ePDP. Importantly it gave me resources and a political environment (Analysis 3) that could make change happen. The resources would enable me to reward and recognise the innovators (Issue base Root definition) and pay for staff development (task based) that might not have otherwise happened.

4.3 Using the model for discussion and debate in the real world

Due to the funding that was awarded to my institution via HEFCE and HEA, the discussions that took place were part of the testing of the conceptual model in a real world situation. Major discussions were structured around Megginson *et al's* (2006) five phases with further formal discussions taking place both on-line and in face-to-face interactions as individuals and small groups. I had the role of facilitator within the formal discussions and designed the on-line environment where discussions took place. I do not go into detail here about what was discussed and the outcomes as I feel this is better placed in Chapter 5 Project findings and analysis: 138 and directly impacts upon Chapter 6 Conclusions and recommendations: 192. However it is important to give more details on the

Pathfinder Project, its design and delivery. The project generated a number of 'deliverables' some of which I was the main author of, for example, the Project Journey report and two project Briefing papers which I have not included here but can be found at www.wlv.ac.uk/pathfinder

4.3.1 The Pathfinder Project: a site for investigating change

This HEFCE funded project via the HEA came out of two areas of best practice highlighted in the University's eLearning benchmarking exercise, 1. innovative use of retreats (two day and one night off-campus staff development events) and 2. the successful implementation of an ePortfolio tool – PebblePad© to support the process of Personal Development Planning. The aim of the Pathfinder Project was to extend the use of ePDP across all of the ten Academic Schools. Within the Learning and Teaching Holon the two areas of best practice were in different operational groups. The use of retreats for blended learning was led by the Head of eLearning and implemented in each academic school by Technology Supported Learning (TSL) Co-ordinators while the successful implementation of ePDP came under me and the SDS Co-ordinators. To grow capability and increase capacity to deliver ePDP each academic school was invited to become part of the Pathfinder Project (and therefore receive funding) to embed ePDP in two Level 1 modules. A key aspect of the project was the appropriate design of ePDP tasks in line with the learning outcomes of each module.

The original concept of how the project would be managed (Figure 24: 123) showed something that was more hierarchical than what was eventually used once the project started. The 'Actors' I had previously identified in my CATWOE were the champions of ePortfolio use and experienced staff using PDP within their curriculum. I thought of them as taking on the role of 'mentors'. This also included members of my own department, ILE, who became part of a project team – The Pathfinder team - however our role was different as we were originally envisaged as being outside of the mentor/mentee relationship. The mentees were other teaching staff who wanted to deliver ePDP opportunities to their students, my clients. In my CATWOE I had also included students as the ultimate client as they would be either the 'victim' or 'beneficiaries' of these activities.

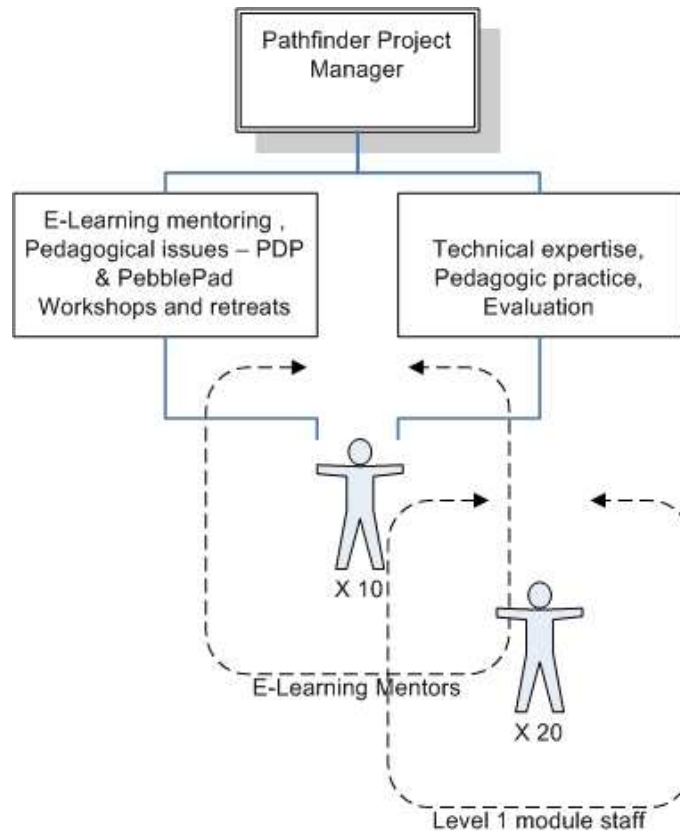


Figure 25 The Pathfinder organisational chart

The eventual tri-partite model (Figure 26: 124) that was finally used in project presentations, posters and briefing papers demonstrated a more equal and mutually beneficial relationship that developed during the life span of the project. The final model departed from a mentoring model that has the relationship existing being between the mentor and mentee though we tried not to work with the mentees without the involvement of the mentors. A term that developed for the role of members from ILE that I did not like was that of 'super mentors'. This did not come from my department but was one that was given to us by the project participants as our working relationships developed. In the model suggested by Megginson *et al*, we [members of ILE] might have been perceived as 'supervisors'. The term 'supervision' was also not a word that we wanted to use and we thought that this could cause some resentment by discipline-based staff (actors). It could appear as though a central department had authority over and above the mentors which was something I was keen to avoid.

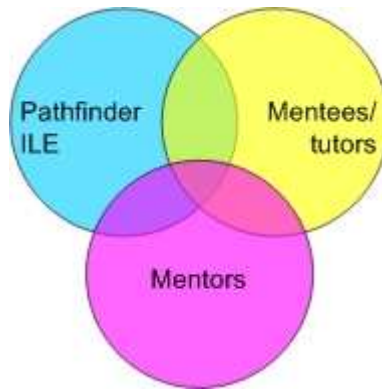


Figure 26 The Pathfinder tri-partite relationship

The project was designed for ePDP peer mentors to support Level 1 tutors in their planning, design, use and assessment of integrated ePDP tasks. Staff development in support of the mentor role and for tutors implementing ePDP was brokered by members of ILE through a series of three away-day retreats over the life span of the project. The retreats followed the stages outline by Megginson *et al* (2006: 19-20) for developmental mentoring. Nine staff carried out the role as an ePDP mentor and nineteen staff were mentees. 1810 Level 1 students engaged with these staff covering PDP tasks in a range of subjects. Modules ranged from groups of 15 to the largest module with 350 students.

The project was to run from May 2007 to May 2008. The timing of this was quite unusual as it did not fit into a normal academic year framework (September to August) and so went against cultural norms such as when staff were allocated teaching hours and additional duties. When this project started we had to negotiate for staff to be released to take part. However we were able to plan for the activities to be embedded in semester 1 modules (September to February) though this did limit the modules that could take part.

I thought that by designating ePDP champions as mentors that they would feel that their innovative work had been recognised. While the project was running the HEA was developing its professional standards agenda. The level 3 descriptor defines the highest level of professional competence as:

“Supports and promotes student learning in all areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values through mentoring and leading individuals and/or teams; incorporates research, scholarship and/or professional practice into those activities”.

In addition to my own needs relating to the Learning and Teaching Holon (Figure 2: 18), the Pathfinder Project tried to address wider institutional issues. There were opportunities within the level 1 curriculum and tools available that could support learners to evidence and reflect on their learning journey. However, it was evident through the benchmarking exercise that this opportunity was not fully embraced across the institution and that a change to this aspect of the curriculum could benefit students greatly. It was felt that this opportunity to develop the level 1 curriculum by integrating ePDP would not only benefit students but would also provide staff with an opportunity to develop new skills and knowledge in areas that they were perhaps not already familiar. In this way the project could potentially affect improvement in the quality of student learning and develop an additional model for the professional development of staff.

There had been positive feedback from students who had experienced PDP through ePortfolio in a number of the early adopter schools previously mentioned. Staff in these early adopter schools had achieved success with their students in a number of ways including as discussed, ePDP tasks which had led to improved motivation, confidence and an improved sense of belonging in their students. Through consultation with employers it also seemed that students may be leaving the institution with insufficient evidence of their learning journey clearly linked or aligned to their attainment, and therefore was not easily able to demonstrate their employability in a holistic way.

The project focused on Level 1 learners in order to provide those at the start of their University career with a range of appropriate opportunities to think about their learning, to develop their own learner identity and to provide strategies for reflection on learning which would remain in their following years of study. However the institution was also conscious that in the National Student Satisfaction (NSS) survey which investigates the perceptions of final year students on their HE and subject related experiences, there was a question specifically related to personal development. Ultimately the effects of embedding ePDP should have an impact on these areas when those students went into their final year.

The Pathfinder Project directly supported one of HEFCE's strategic aims (2005) for e-learning - Strand 3 Student support, progression and collaboration, Objective 3.4 Encourage e-based systems of describing learning achievement

and personal development planning (PDP). It also hoped to make a contribution to my institution's understanding of the issues in the following aims in HEFCE's eLearning strategy;

- 1.1 Reward excellence and promote and encourage innovation in e-learning
- 2.3 Promote the sharing of learning technology and resources across the HE sector and between sectors
- 4.4 Address skills, knowledge and competencies for e-learning in training and continuing professional development for learning and teaching staff, including learning technologists
- 4.5 Review the human capacity in the HE sector to deliver future e-learning growth

Apart from the political and institutional issues the project hoped to provide the HE sector with ePDP resources. These might include:

1. A best practice guide on approaches to the design of blended electronic PDP activities and on staff development for the design of blended electronic PDP activities
2. Cases studies on the design of blended electronic PDP activities across the 10 Academic Schools
3. Pedagogic templates to guide design of integrated electronic PDP activities in different subject areas
4. National conference papers and publications, as and when, on strategic change in the Level 1 curriculum
5. To contribute to private and public blogs as well as HELGA, as required by the Pathfinders project

What the Pathfinder Project hoped to achieve obviously linked to my doctoral project which is not surprising as I was one of the advisors on the bid writing, but the Pathfinder Project went much further than I wanted to go. The Pathfinder Project was finally managed by the Head of eLearning who dealt with the bigger issues related to eLearning for the sector and for the institution leaving me to concentrate on the issues relating to my doctoral project. The other role that was created internally was that of Project Evaluator. This was given to a close colleague who allowed me to include SSM elements into the project evaluation. All participants were asked their permission for me to repurpose any project data

for my doctoral project on the understanding that comments and data would be unattributed to any individual unless explicit permission was given. This was agreed also, by the Project Manager and was made known to the Pathfinder Project Steering Committee.

The main features of the Pathfinder Project that I was able to influence and include in the project were:

- Using developmental mentoring
- Using the stages in developmental mentoring as a structure for delivering staff development via 3 residential retreats
- Using a collaborative ePortfolio for the evaluation activities of the project throughout the life span of the project
- Using the ePortfolio system to provide materials for the participants and for communication between members of the project
- Using the concepts of cultural desirability and cultural feasibility from SSM as criteria within the project evaluation
- Using visual representations to articulate the project
- Using SSM features such as structured discussions about the situation and its improvement

I created a role description for the ePDP mentors' role that asked them to work with the level 1 module tutors helping them develop the technical and pedagogical knowledge to embed ePDP within their curriculum. The level 1 tutor would be required to work with the ePDP mentor through the different mentoring stages that were introduced in each of the three retreats.

To be an ePDP mentor would therefore require someone to be:

- A user of PDP and preferably ePDP with PebblePad©
- Willing to work as a member of various teams – Pathfinder Project, e-Learning Mentor, School-based
- Have good communication and questioning skills
- Willing to reflect on and develop their own personal development planning.

The ePDP mentors tasks and responsibilities would include:

- undertaking the role of developmental mentor within the school, working with designated level 1 teaching staff
- developing and enhancing the technical and pedagogical expertise to effectively undertake the mentor role
- attendance and active participation in all training and development activities relating to this project
- active participation in a reflective collaborative web folio on the role of ePDP mentors that would be shared with both internal and external members of the Pathfinder Project
- keeping a reflective personal web folio on the role of ePDP mentor to be shared with internal members of the Pathfinder Project
- submitting any required records or evidence
- keeping to project deadlines

At the start of the project I did not recognise that this role description would become so important to my key aim of having a change for improvement that allowed and promoted mutual growth. Issues arose regarding models of mentoring that at this early stage in the project planning I had not anticipated. These will be discussed further in Chapter 5 Project findings and analysis: 138

The project wanted to make the most of previous success in using a retreat model to increase participation in eLearning. However unpublished post-retreat evaluation shown a rapid fading and lack of confidence in the participants' personal skills once they were back in their 'day-to-day' learning and teaching environments. I wanted to design-in a structure for the retreats that would give a different purpose and function, developmental to each retreat, and that could show participants the process they would be going through. I thought that it was also important to make participants aware that the relationship that was to be created had an end to it and was not something that would just carry on. From previous retreats, the retreat facilitators reported that after the retreat they were working with the same people back in their classrooms and that in some cases the ownership of the skills and knowledge stayed with the facilitators and was not passed on or owned by the 'learners'. Retreat 1 would have an emphasis on stages 1 and 2 - Building rapport and setting direction. This would entail looking at curriculum design, learning outcomes, assessment strategies, assessment tasks and learner activities. The aim of the retreat is to set a

direction for the mentoring relationship identifying key outcomes. (See Appendix 2 retreat 1: 221). Retreat 2 would look at stage 3 - Progression. Mentees supported by their mentors would work from the identified outcomes and continue reflecting-on-action about their experiences of embedding ePDP within the curriculum. (See Appendix 3 retreat 2: 224). Retreat 3 would look at stage 4 - Winding up and stage 5 - moving on. These stages would also address issues for my project regarding the cultural desirability and feasibility of developmental mentoring. (See Appendix 4 retreat 3: 226).

4.3.2 Pathfinder evaluation

The Evaluation strategy of the Pathfinder Project looked at three different perceptions of embedding ePDP:

- The tutor
- The student experience
- The mentoring relationship

There were two separate reports, one internal and one external, although both reports addressed the following questions:

1. What are the facilitating and inhibiting factors of implementing and embedding ePDP into level 1 modules?
2. What scaffolded activities do staff put in place to support PDP via an ePortfolio system, why, and how are the outcomes evidenced?
3. How far does the mentoring model, developed through retreats and a focused immersion model, represent a (cost) effective strategy for staff development for the university?
4. What are student perceptions of ePDP? What are the characteristics of student ePDP experiences?
5. What impact has there been on the academic practice of those staff involved in the project?

The external contribution to the evaluation of the Project was based on a round of interviews with Associate Deans for Learning and Teaching focussed primarily upon the third evaluation question; how far the retreat and mentoring model developed by the Project through retreats might represent a (cost) effective

strategy for staff development for the University in this (and other) areas. Such a focus also sought to illuminate issues of more general concern in the institution in relation to moving e-practice beyond pockets of expertise into more widespread use.

The following data was collected and used in both reports:

606 student questionnaires.

81 staff questionnaires (consisting of interim, end of project and retreat specific questionnaires)

3 hours of video of staff feedback presentations.

2 hours audio of staff final interviews.

External evaluation of telephone interviews with Associate Deans within the project schools

I have had access to all data bar the telephone conversations, for my doctorate and have used relevant data to support the SSM process. The majority of the data has fed into Analysis 2 and 3 in the finding out phase, which has been organic and evolving throughout my project. The data has had impact on Chapter 5 Project findings and analysis: 138 and Chapter 6 Conclusions and recommendations: 192. A key success criteria for the project was the wider and more capable use of an ePortfolio system, specifically the software PebblePad©. To this effect I designed all the retreat activities using the software in the way I had observed staff using the tool with their students. This included creating 'scaffolded templates' used in the taught curriculum for students to download, personalise and own. The templates would be used throughout the module for both formative and summative assessment. For the Pathfinder Project, a collaborative web folio template (Figure 27: 131) was created. It required participants to offer reflections on mentoring in their own module teaching contexts. Permission to see these reflections was given to individual academic school groups, members of ILE and the external evaluator.

The scaffolded collaborative web folio has acted like a chart matrix (Megginson *et al* 2006) to ask questions about and compare the activities and their connections from the concept model in the real world environment.

Overview Mentoring models Retreats Evaluation Resources **Module 1 staff feedback** Module 2 staff feedback CAMEL experience

Pathfinder - Schools collaborative webfolio

This is the page relating to the experience of staff in the School of (Put your school name here) our team consists of (give names and identify the different roles). The modules that have taken part in this project are (give module codes and names and approximate student numbers. Attach module guides).

This page refers to module (put module code in here)

Please give you feedback on the following areas as you go through this project

1. Comment on general issues relating to mentoring at the start of the project
2. What were the specific issues relating to building rapport?, how were they dealt with? What sense did you make of this? What would you do differently? and Why?
3. What were the specific issues relating to setting directions/goal setting?, how were they dealt with? What sense did you make of this? What would you do differently? and Why?
4. What were the specific issues relating to progression?, how were they dealt with? What sense did you make of this? What would you do differently? and Why?
5. What were the specific issues relating to winding up?, how were they dealt with? What sense did you make of this? What would you do differently? and Why?
6. What were the specific issues relating to moving on?, how were they dealt with? What sense did you make of this? What would you do differently? and Why?
7. Comment on general issues relating to mentoring at the end of the project)

PLEASE DELETE THE TEXT IN RED WHEN YOU HAVE FILLED IN THE 'GAPS'

Figure 27 Screen grab: school collaborative web folio template

The questions asked are open to individual and group reflections which are then shared with other participants in the project. For example, (Figure 28: 131), this reflection was shared by a discipline-based mentor.

1) All tutors in the module team have a very different vision of how they wish to engage with students and what they are prepared to engage with. Discussion with the team does not always bring out those differences of expectations of the tutor role and individuals are reluctant to voice these concerns. The spectrum ran from great, useful, bring it on through to I can see it could be useful but not sure I can use it to the opposite end of I can use it but I won't.

Figure 28 Screen grab: staff reflection

By offering materials, including the collaborative web folio, through a Gateway, (a term used in the PebblePad© software), I wanted to recreate the student experience for staff (Figure 29: 132). I had observed that students would often be given instructions to access material from a Gateway, personalise it and resubmit is for both peer and tutor assessment and comment but that sometimes these actions had never been done by the tutor themselves.

The screenshot shows the GATEWAY PebblePAD interface. At the top, there is a navigation breadcrumb: University > CELT > Pathfinder Project > Retreat resources. The page title is "Retreat resources". On the right, there is a "Back" link and "Your permissions: Admin :: Archive :: View".

On the left side, there are two main sections:

- More Gateways:** Includes a "Go up a level" link and a message "No more Gateways."
- Gateway Tools:** Includes links for "Add New Gateway", "Edit Gateway", "Duplicate Gateway", "Move Gateway", "Remove Gateway", and "Remove All Publications".

The main content area is titled "Published Items" and contains a table with the following data:

Title	Published	Last modified	Published by	Administer
Pathfinder Activity 1 Risk Analysis	September 10, 2007	September 10, 2007	Lawton, Megan (le1911)	[Administer] [Trash]
Mentoring scenario 4	September 10, 2007	September 10, 2007	Lawton, Megan (le1911)	[Administer] [Trash]
Mentoring scenario 3	September 10, 2007	September 10, 2007	Lawton, Megan (le1911)	[Administer] [Trash]
Mentoring scenario 2	September 10, 2007	September 10, 2007	Lawton, Megan (le1911)	[Administer] [Trash]
Mentoring scenario 1	September 10, 2007	September 10, 2007	Lawton, Megan (le1911)	[Administer] [Trash]
Pathfinder - Schools collaborative webfolio	September 10, 2007	October 25, 2007	Lawton, Megan (le1911)	[Administer] [Trash]
Pathfinder project	September 12, 2007	September 12, 2007	Lawton, Megan (le1911)	[Administer] [Trash]
Review of PDP at Level 1	September 17, 2007	September 17, 2007	Lawton, Megan (le1911)	[Administer] [Trash]
Retreat 2 RA Review	October 19, 2007	October 19, 2007	Lawton, Megan (le1911)	[Administer] [Trash]

Figure 29 Screen grab: Pathfinder resources gateway

I had also hoped that using on-line tools for collaboration would help with the mentoring process. In particular I hoped that it would support the mentees doing things for themselves, helping the mentee to develop their own wisdom, for them to steer their own personal development and to aid questioning and social exchange that would emphasize learning. I envisaged the on-line 'tools' as supporting face-to-face interactions via the retreats as well as between the retreats when both the mentors and mentees were back working in their own discipline-based cultures. In addition, the on-line 'tools' could allow more fluidity between all participants rather than keeping to strict discipline-based cohorts. At the first retreat participants felt that they needed to work with people who understood their subject cultures. However, that quickly changed with the realisation that subject knowledge was of less importance than the pedagogic approaches used and the knowledge of how to get the software to do what you wanted. During the first retreat one mentor had to drop out of the project leaving their mentees with no discipline mentor. A mentor from an unrelated discipline stepped in to provide support which demonstrated to the rest of the group that shared discipline knowledge was not important. This supports the concept that in developmental mentoring the mentor needs to be more experienced in issues relevant to the mentees' learning needs.

Rather than take an approach that taught software skills I wanted to put members of staff in a situation where they could experience what they were asking their students to do and to note the instructions that they needed to be given to fulfil a task effectively. For many participants this was not something

they had done before as in some schools 'education technologists' operated the software so the knowledge of its use stayed with them not the tutors. Simple omissions in a process could mean that a student could not submit their work online or that by setting up a 'Gateway' in a particular way it would automatically close by a given date. If tutors knew this then they could be in far more control of the learning and teaching that they were asking their students to engage with. Most members of staff had never posted a response to a 'Gateway' (Figure 30: 133). Their experience was likely to be that they had set up the activity but not necessarily followed it through as though they were a student. Getting them to do this within the Pathfinder Project raised valuable issues for them such as how they titled their modules and organised their groups.

The screenshot displays a user interface for managing digital assets. On the left, there are two panels: 'More Gateways' with a 'Go up a level' button and 'No more Gateways.' text, and 'Gateway Tools' with options to Add, Edit, Duplicate, Move, Remove, or Remove All Publications. On the right, a 'Published Items' table lists documents with their titles, publication dates, and last modified dates.

Title	Published	Last modified
Activity 1 Risk Assessment [redacted]	September 11, 2007	September 11, 2007
Pathfinder Risk Analysis [redacted]	September 11, 2007	September 11, 2007
Risk analysis	September 11, 2007	September 11, 2007
[redacted] Risk Assessment	September 11, 2007	September 12, 2007
[redacted] Pathfinder Risk Assesment Analysis	September 11, 2007	September 11, 2007
[redacted] risk analysis	September 11, 2007	September 11, 2007
Pathfinder Activity 1 Risk analysis [redacted]	September 11, 2007	September 11, 2007
[redacted] risk analysis	September 11, 2007	September 11, 2007
Risk Assessment [redacted]	September 11, 2007	September 11, 2007
Mentoring scenario 1 (BA)	September 12, 2007	September 12, 2007
Mentoring scenario 2 (BA)	September 12, 2007	September 12, 2007

Figure 30 Screen grab: assets shared in a gateway

The use of the software to mimic the student experience was vital as we were able to notice key issues that I had previously observed in the classroom. (see section 4.1.2.2 Critical incidents: 106). The ILE Pathfinder team along with the mentors were able to develop software functionality for tutors within their own context. We were able to use the same language and processes that were used with students but hopefully demonstrate effective use of PebblePad© as well as enhancing the capability of participants. It also stopped the staff development sessions become software training or 'button pushing' exercises.

4.4 Defining action for improvement

As a result of the Pathfinder Project I had been able to test, discuss and debate whether a concept of development mentoring would motivate staff to engage in PDP. The results of those exchanges raised key issues for defining the action for improvement. Based on the evaluation data gathered within the project and from discussions with all the participants during the last retreat I had modelled two pictures, Figure 31: 135 and Figure 32: 136. I visualized what I perceived staff felt were the positive and negative issues related to cultural desirability and cultural feasibility. Checkland and Poulter (2006) discuss cultural feasibility before cultural desirability, yet I found within my own work situation that discussions turned those two areas around; desirability first, then feasibility. I believe this was caused by the structure of the institution in which departments are cascade-managed by a Dean, supported by two–four Associate Deans who are in turn supported by divisional heads, then subject Co-ordinators. This means that most staff who are involved in delivering student learning, at the 'chalk-face' have little or no responsibility or control over resource allocation. They therefore make do with the best that any situation can offer them.

4.4.1 Culturally desirable

I shared the images with the participants and got some strong reactions to some of the visual metaphors used. The one that was most appreciated when discussing cultural desirability was the burning CD to represent 'sabotage' and 'disaffection' by colleagues in using the ePortfolio system. On the positive side staff really valued the process of reflection and the time and space for dialogue with colleagues. On the negative side there were three major areas of concern, 1. the expectations of participants in the project, colleagues and managers, 2. colleague engagement and 3. recognition and allocation of hours. These areas are discussed further in section 5.1.1 Desirability: 139. Checkland and Poulter (2006:55) comment that a fundamental error that secondary literature makes about SSM is that,

"It assumes that the purpose of the discussion/debate is to find consensus". [...] "SSM uses a much more subtle idea ... finding an accommodation".

This was the case within the Pathfinder Project in particular where there were existing discipline traditions relating to mentoring models, roles and outcomes.

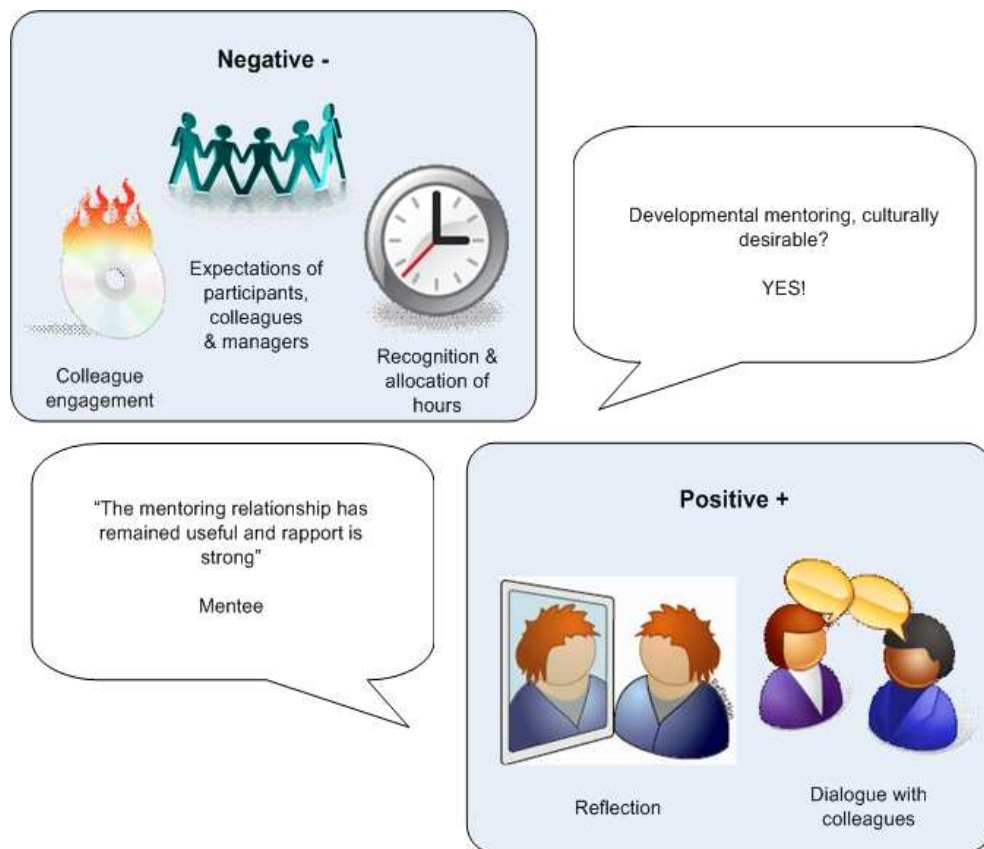


Figure 31 Positive and negative views on cultural desirability

4.4.2 Culturally feasible

Within the image representing cultural feasibility (Figure 32: 136) the 'scales' were deemed to be the most powerful image. Staff identified (with) the tensions that they and their colleagues faced trying to balance the needs of the students with the resources they had through which to offer learning and teaching experiences. The main area for concern on the feasibility of developmental mentoring remains the conflict of resource management, in particular hours for mentoring and the perceived value and benefit from this relationship. To unlock this situation there needs to be more evidenced-based research that shows that PDP makes a difference. Where students are concerned there needs to be evidence related to retention, progress and achievement. For staff the measures are harder to quantify. These issues are discussed further in section 5.1.2 : 140.

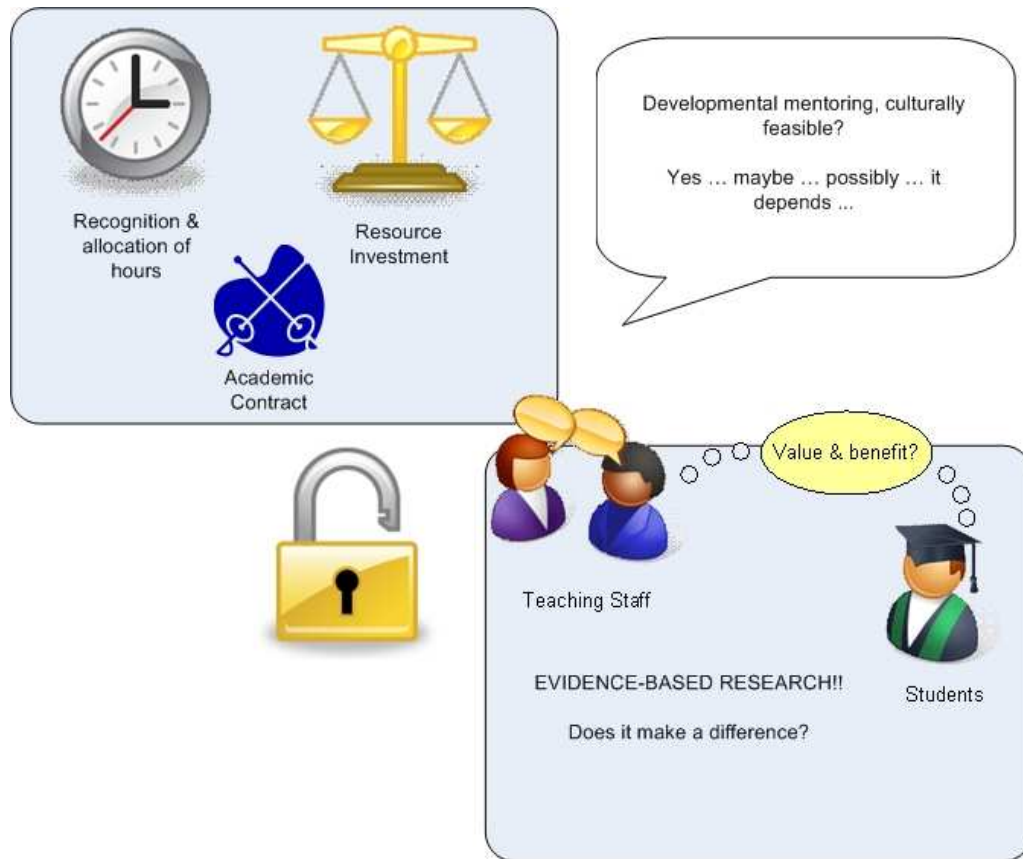


Figure 32 Views on the cultural feasibility

4.5 A reflection on this chapter.

SSM is something that is fluid and not linear however I have had to try to present the experience of using SSM in a way that can fit the needs of the doctoral project report. This has been difficult and complex and I am not sure whether the structure I have presented is clear. It does make sense to me and reflects my priorities rather than other participants. My project is collaborative as views of others have informed my outcomes and recommendations. However, ultimately I have to make sense of the activities as I have experienced them and offered them to others. My work role requires me to think strategically and to consider institutional and sectoral priorities that discipline-based colleagues do not need to engage with in the same way as my department and myself. The SSM process also identifies the role of 'practitioner' (Analysis 1 - social) whose role is to conduct the investigation. As that designated person, even though I designated myself for that position, I bring to that role all my life experiences. One area that demonstrates this well is the amount of visual imagery that I have

used within the activities. This is a theme that I will explore in more detail in section 5.4 Academics responding to change: 176. I have also been very aware of trying not to enter into any discussion and debates that I need to keep for my project findings, likewise the defined action for improvement that links to the recommendations. At times I have felt therefore that the activities may have become mere descriptions of what has happened, as to enter into a critical analysis of what has helped or hindered the activities is to open up the discussions of the conceptual model compared to the real world situation.

Chapter 5 Project findings and analysis

This chapter is in two parts. Part 1 deals with the findings from the Pathfinder Project. Part 2 addresses the findings from my doctoral project. Both sections address the discussion through the stages within SSM. The reason that the Pathfinder Project is dealt with first is that the discussion, recommendations and conclusions from this project have influenced the debate in my doctoral work which is more comprehensive. Rather than attempting to address all issues raised within the Pathfinder Project in my doctoral report I am concentrating on three key areas, firstly, developmental mentoring used in a tri-partite relationship, secondly, communities of practice and thirdly, the issue of academics responding to change. The complete findings from the Pathfinder Project have been published in both an internal and external evaluation report that can be found at www.wlv.ac.uk/pathfinder under the project deliverables.

5.1 Developmental mentoring within the Pathfinder Project

At the final residential event I invited the participants to look at the desirability of developmental mentoring in three different ways: once as a subject based group then as a larger discussion group and finally as individuals with comments made in writing. In some cases I followed up individual comments with one-to-one discussions. I invited views in these ways because I was conscious of the various different power relationships which had existed over the course of my research; in certain situations individual subject members took it upon themselves to speak on behalf of what they saw as their team. I also felt that I needed to give the team members a range of opportunities to discuss the events and outcomes that had taken place as members of different communities of practice. Within my institutional culture the day-to-day interface that most members of staff have is with their students and subject colleagues. My department and the subject of learning and teaching is one of the few areas that bring people together across subject boundaries. Therefore the role of the wider group discussions was to allow cross subject discussions that looked at the bigger institutional structures and cultures. The individual comments were shared with the project team in ILE but not directly with other participants. If

individual comments were used in the final project reports the comments were de-personalised so that they could not be attributed to any individual or subject. The reason for doing this was that I did not want anyone who had taken part in the project to feel personally criticised.

5.1.1 Desirability

The general accommodated response to the question of whether developmental mentoring was culturally desirability to increase the engagement of teaching staff with PDP was that - yes it was. However there were important positive and negative elements to this as mentioned briefly in the section 4.4. Defining action for improvement: 134.

The use of developmental mentoring made members of staff reflect more deeply about what they were hoping to achieve and what they had learnt and taken from their experiences, both positive and negative. Staff commented that by reflecting with others rather than in isolation, (Brockbank and McGill 1998 and Cowan 2006) they were able to be more positive and see what worked as well as what did not. If things had gone wrong (in their terms) the mentoring relationships within the project gave them the time and space to value and revisit their reflections so that they gained deeper understanding and satisfaction. The cyclical nature of revisiting previous reflections and reviewing what had been said was felt to be particularly beneficial and a process which people said that they didn't often have time or space to do as they always seemed to be looking forward to the next thing to do.

The other positive comment relates to the time and space to talk to both colleagues within a subject and also to those in different schools and campuses. All courses within the university are modular this can and does lead to people working on their own modules as individuals and as members of small teams who may not experience the subject being taught as a whole entity. This does depend on the number of students and staff on a subject. For example those teaching on a mainly specialist subject such as mathematics knew their team members and students very well but had little or no interaction with anyone outside of that subject area. Alternatively, someone teaching on an integrated award that involved working with other schools had a wider knowledge of

different cultural practices but often had larger class sizes and a more diverse student body.

5.1.2 Feasibility

In the final Internal Evaluation Report of the Pathfinder Project (2008) the following "Overall project evaluation messages" were noted by Brett, Lawton and Purnell (2008) in relation to the feasibility of developmental mentoring:

"Working together as a community is beneficial, even if sometimes difficult to get such a big project community together. The retreat model was key to bringing together such a big group of staff, who otherwise would have not got together to share ideas. Institutional cultures and infrastructures need to make space and time for colleagues to work together.

Mentoring is a valued and desired part of staff development. Staff would like to be in a mentoring relationship. However, it is important that hours are allocated to it within the workload to show that it is valued by senior managers as much as it is by staff. It is the time allowed by the project both for mentoring and exploring creative ways to integrate ePortfolio and PDP that has been one of the key factors in staff engagement and enthusiasm.

Buy-in from senior managers can sometimes be difficult but is crucial to get support at all levels to make integration of ePDP a team supported endeavour.

A stable support structure for both pedagogy and technology needs to be in place when integrating ePDP. Staff and students benefit from being supported when starting out with ePDP, advice on where ePDP might already naturally sit within their curriculum or simply by providing an extra pair of experienced hands when staff first deliver the hands-on ePortfolio part of ePDP are all important factors in successful integration of ePDP. There is a need for an extension to the current IT services provision that can support more in depth application support.

The majority of students enjoyed the ePDP activities, but it is key that they see a value and a benefit in undertaking these tasks. Fundamental to student engagement with ePDP is staff engagement, students want staff to be enthusiastic about ePDP and this enthusiasm is infectious. Feedback is key in sustaining engagement and not just summative feedback, many students want to know that their work is valued by someone reading it before they have to submit it at the end of term, therefore it is key that feedback expectations are set and met and that ePDP tasks are chosen carefully to ensure meaningful feedback can be given and not lost within too many different activities. Less can often be more with ePDP activities, less activities, more focused feedback”.

Key words relating to the feasibility are; time, support, buy in, value and benefit, enthusiasm. Without commitment then developmental mentoring is not feasible however desirable it might be. In the current economic climate of cuts and budget reduction the resource emphasis will rightly be focused on classroom teaching. Of the ten schools that started out in the Pathfinder Project we started with nine mentors, immediately lost two, of the remaining seven, three will be leaving this academic year through voluntary redundancy, leaving us four of our original mentors. However, of the eighteen mentees twelve are now acting informally as mentors in ePDP and ePortfolio based learning to discipline-based colleagues.

5.2 Developmental mentoring in a wider debate

Following on from the discussion within the Pathfinder Project another simultaneous project that was operating was the piloting of a staff mentoring scheme. This scheme was being set up using a developmental model of mentoring. The scheme was aimed at any member of staff and for any purpose that they felt they needed though there was an emphasis on personal and career development. This scheme is still running and one of the key discussions I have had in relation with my work has been with the University staff mentoring scheme organiser, (MSO). My discussions with MSO have been within the SSM context of using the model for discussion and debate in a real world environment.

5.2.1 A mentoring scheme or philosophy?

When I looked at the concept of mentoring I thought I could see how this might address the root definition however there were a number of issues that would affect how I could engage with the process and concept. One of the key issues was that I needed to build capability in staff to increase institutional capacity. We had an acute shortage of those who were actively engaged with promoting the concepts of PDP or with using the ePortfolio system. Megginson *et al* state that 'Mentoring schemes are developed in response to a need' (2006: 8). Given the time frame for the opportunity to use developmental mentoring within the Pathfinder Project I did not set up a model that could be described as a mentoring 'scheme' however there were some similarities such as having a corporate aim and goal, having distinct roles and role descriptors. The Pathfinder Project gave me the ability to buy some time for those who were identified as project participants and therefore they became part of the project/scheme as Megginson *et al* (2006: 8) highlight,

'... mentoring schemes require resources (finance, effort, time and people),'

Buying time out was seen as a key motivational factor in taking part. It also gave us the ability to request certain behaviours and to ask that certain activities took place. However the allocation of time also became one of the key negatives when looking at the desirability and feasibility of mentoring in the future. When asked, what are going to be the biggest challenges to the success of the mentoring relationship between you and your tutors? The following responses were received;

- M1: Other staff on the module.
- M2: The allocation of time for the team of 5 to sit down on a regular basis and discuss progress. We are all teaching at the same time on the allocated module and it would be too much to expect meeting at that time. The blog will perhaps help so tutors can dip in at times convenient to them.
- M3: Time to meet and time to keep up.
- M4: Other members of staff. Getting the time allocated in a verifiable way! This could be a big problem → 3 x 2 day meeting could already be 48 hrs leaving 27 hrs @ 75 hrs = less than 1 hr / week.

M5: Finding time in a busy schedule / academic year.

M6: Maintaining effective communication in the face of busy schedules.

Our university has an academic contract that stipulates hours for certain activities e.g. teaching and relating administration, scholarly activity and research. Each person has their own individual spreadsheet that is then published within their academic school. What has happened in some areas is that unless there is an allocation of hours then people will not take on an activity. This lack of recognition for trying new things was one of the key concerns when originally talking to the ePortfolio champions. They felt that they had spent a lot of their own time and effort trying new things out that then was not rewarded or recognised. We hoped that the Pathfinder Project would be seen as recognising their efforts by asking them to be the mentors. In most cases this did happen but an outcome we did not expect was that in a few cases there was an observed perception of resentment that the mentees were seen as new innovators with their mentors' work being acknowledged.

"For those early adopters and their mentees it has been at times, and continues to be, an everyday struggle to convince students and colleagues of the benefits of engaging with a dialogic and student-centred technology and process without full support". (mentor)

Meggison *et al* (2006) recognise that not all stakeholders within a scheme may agree on what the aims and outcomes should be and therefore for some they will see failure, conflict and tensions. I recognise this as an issue from the start of the Pathfinder Project and in part realise that as I am the one using SSM I am at the stage where I can see something that will define action for improvement after those within the project have completed their tasks and moved on. I can see a place for developmental mentoring concepts however the notion of a resourced 'scheme' would not go down well in the current economic climate unless it was externally funded. What is possible to implement is the concept of a developmental philosophy, a way of working with others that accepts the developmental ethos. In practical terms this has happened with the development of new posts – Blended Learning Advisors who by a stretch of the imagination could be seen as a scheme. Their role is to work closely with discipline-based staff, helping them develop the knowledge they need to deliver the Blended Learning Strategy in their curriculum. In discussion with MSO she identified that what happened in the Pathfinder Project could have been a scheme however

there were some fundamental elements that she and I agreed affected the outcome.

One of the most important was the lack of any real capacity for mentors to be selected or rejected. In some cases there were obvious people to be mentors however they did not really have to buy-into the ethos of developmental mentoring, they were others who were less obvious but were in designated roles that made them eligible in the eyes of their resource managers. For some of these people the lack of engagement was obvious from the start, less from a lack of interest but more from a self perception that they had little to offer in terms of specific skills and abilities. This was not the view from the project team but appeared to be more of a perception of the aim of the project. In this situation I felt that the mentors were placed by their resource managers in a difficult situation as they were senior in learning and teaching terms to the mentees but not, as they perceived, in the skills that they thought mattered. I was looking for transformative relationships but for some this was not their expectation. This was due in part to the very tight time scale that this 'scheme' was set up in and the lack of understanding in some cases of the aim of the project.

The idea of developing capability to increase capacity was for some staff coming towards the end of the academic careers something that they thought was not for them. This was not voiced by those who would have been mentored by them, who had respect for their discipline-based knowledge and experience. A scheme that asked mentors to self select would have solved this reticence. The investment of time and effort in some of these relationships did not balance against the level of engagement. If I did this again (and I would) I would spend time and effort making sure that all stakeholders in the scheme were aware of the expectations and outcomes of the scheme and what it was really hoping to achieve. As scheme organiser I would also have more input into the selection of the mentors in a way that was more sensitive to the needs of the scheme, those who 'others' identified as ideal mentors and those who in fact might have been better candidates but had no opportunity to come forward.

5.2.2 Matching

The ability to match effectively was strongly affected by the limited number of people we could invite to be mentors. Matching is where a mentee would express a mentoring need or desire. The mentoring scheme co-ordinator or manager would then try to find a mentor that would meet then needs of the mentee. The MSO highlighted the fact that within the staff mentoring scheme the matching was a key element which was conducted sensitively and in confidence, unlike the experience in the Pathfinder Project.

In the Pathfinder Project the relationship started the other way round. I was trying to meet my perceptions of my institution's needs. I was driving the relationship rather the motivation for the relationship coming from the mentee. The first roles that were identified were the mentors – one to work with each academic school, but in our eyes not necessarily having to be from that school. I developed the role descriptors which were given to the academic schools to decide who they would give the hours for mentoring to. There were those who we, as a project team, thought would be identified and who would have been very offended if they had not been asked to be mentors and then there were some obvious gaps. This changed the initial parameters for the mentor roles.

In the project we did not see a need for there to be one mentor per academic school but the senior managers within the school did. In part this also related to the funding that each school was to receive, all wanted equal funding rather than some getting more by providing mentors for other discipline areas, though this was not an issue for the project team. Potential participants from the academic schools initially felt quite strongly that there needed to be some level of discipline expertise and knowledge in the mentoring relationship. Out of the nine designated mentors seven had recognised learning and teaching roles within the existing Learning and Teaching Holon, the other two were within the satellite ePortfolio community. I believe these choices were made on a lack of knowledge about developmental mentoring and a perception within the institution that mentoring was a hierarchical relationship. I had intended to make the difference very clear to those who participated in the project but did not really make sure that the key stakeholders – the resource managers were clear on the difference in the mentoring model. This would be less likely to happen now as the staff mentoring scheme has gone in some way to changing internal perceptions of mentoring and uses a very similar model to that of Megginson *et al* (2006).

5.2.3 Recruitment and selection

Meggison *et al* (2006: 9) suggest that scheme organisers and designers can use key issues to help them decide who should be in the scheme, these are:

- Eligibility.* Who is eligible to be a mentee? What are the criteria?
- Credibility.* What characteristics, attributes, experience or knowledge does the mentor need to have, in order to be credible to the mentee?
- Availability.* What is the likely availability for the scheme in terms of both mentors and mentees? Are there imbalances?
- Motivation.* What is likely to motivate both mentors and mentees to be involved? What might be the other reasons (perhaps unhelpful) that might attract people to this scheme?

In terms of eligibility I would argue that it is important to have clear criteria for the mentor as well as for the mentee. If I had insisted that all mentors must adopt a developmental model for mentoring to be eligible for the project this might have given me a buffer to address the issues of those who did not engage, for whatever reason, with this ethos. The credibility of mentors to the mentee is just one issue, however perhaps a more important point that came out of the Pathfinder Project was the mentor's view of their own credibility. I think that we had put the mentors in the Pathfinder Project in a position where they were not able to opt out if they felt they were not credible mentors. This was regardless of what their potential mentees felt. If they had been identified by their resource managers as the appropriate person for this role then it would have been personally, professionally and politically difficult for them to say no. The lack of capacity of staff with relevant skills and knowledge to develop ePortfolio based learning was key to the Pathfinder Project, the challenge was to find an effective way of achieving this.

"From the purely technical point of view, I am not directly their best potential source of support. However, I am confident that I can support the tutors in keeping on target, motivated and in helping them to get the help they need". (mentor)

Coercing people to take on roles they did not feel comfortable with did affect engagement. We were fortunate to retrieve those affected relationships.

Motivation is a key issue for my project as I hope to have a better understanding of how a central department can work more effectively with members of teaching staff from our Academic Schools. All those involved in the Pathfinder Project are passionate about learning and teaching and all came together for the purposeful activity of developing curriculum that would engage and offer students opportunities for PDP through the university's ePortfolio system. This was a binding factor in the project.

"What I have valued most about being a mentor has been sharing another's journey and development, being able to facilitate some of their development in confidence and risk taking, watching them take big steps because they know I'm there to catch them, knowing that I can 'push' them in their practices a little more each session". (mentor)

"Good to see the work of colleagues in depth and recognise quite different teaching/learning styles". (mentor)

As the project attracted external funding and external publicity the stakes were raised in both positive and negative ways. On the positive side we had the motivation of offering money to the Academic Schools to take part therefore releasing staff from some teaching commitments and paying for the retreats but this might have affected who was deemed as 'credible'.

5.2.4 Supervision

In discussions with MSO on supervision we came to the conclusion that in fact we did not have anyone acting in the role of supervisor. The MSO suggested that in fact any scheme needs two supervisors with different roles. Firstly, a supervisor separate to the mentoring scheme who can take an objective view of the relationships. This role would provide an *informative* (educational), *restorative* (supportive) and *normative* (knowing you are not alone) function (Proctor 2000). Secondly, a supervisor who has knowledge of the scheme and who takes more of a policy and practice overview; this person might also provide observations of the scheme (not the mentoring meetings) to feedback to the scheme manager. It has been suggested (MSO) that we had been operating a tri-mentoring model.

Tri-mentoring models can be found in Canada, used in particular within HE institutions for student mentoring. An example of this would be at the University of British Columbia (Figure 33: 148).

Industry/faculty member

|

Senior student

|

Junior student

Figure 33 Tri-mentoring model at the University of British Columbia (2010)

In this structure of the tri-mentoring program faculty members and industry people are seen as the top tier mentors. They support the senior student who is either a recent graduate or an undergraduate student coming towards the end of their degree. They are both mentor to the Junior student and mentee of the faculty and industry people. The Junior student is anyone currently studying at the university who would like a mentor.

In Ryerson University, Canada, their model uses the terms: lead mentor, mentor and mentee. The lead mentor is described as (Ryerson University 2010):

“The Leader Mentor is a student position in Tri-Mentoring that provides assistance and mentoring to a specific group of mentoring pairs in the course of the program during the school year. They connect with the mentor and the mentee to make for certain that they engage in the mentoring partnership productively and to help in dealing with any problems if ever they should arise”.

The Ryerson model also would expect the lead mentor to have been a mentor prior to taking on a lead role. What we did was to create a similar model but for staff. In this model (Figure 34: 150) the ILE Pathfinder team member (IPFM) would only mentor a mentee by themselves if no mentor existed. If a mentor existed then the IPFM could have a relationship with a discipline-based mentor

by themselves but not with a mentee unless the discipline mentor was also present (physically or virtually). The underlying concept for this was capacity building. If we had met with mentees without their mentors present then not only could we damage and undermine the mentoring relationship but also not see what support was needed to progress the relationship and knowledge. The IPFM were sometimes called 'super mentors' or 'Über-mentors' but we were never comfortable with that term. We were not supervisors as understood within mentoring terms. The term 'lead' or 'guide' or 'advice' mentor/ advisory mentors are more accurate descriptions of the role that we played. The role of the members in ILE became quite fluid dependent on the relationship that was eventually identified. In some cases we became mentors directly working with mentees, in some cases we became mentors to both the discipline-based mentor/mentee relationship primarily based on our expertise and knowledge of the software and in two cases we became arbitrators between the mentor and mentees, this last role being the most difficult. In both cases there already existed a well established understanding of mentoring in the disciplinary context. The mentoring traditions in those disciplines were not ones that recognised the elements within developmental mentoring, they were more akin to sponsorship mentoring. In both disciplines those being mentored would be in practical situations working with vulnerable people therefore the mentoring models used were about minimising risk. Both mentors were already mentoring within their discipline environment and were also early adopters of the ePortfolio systems so were already slightly resentful as they perceived that their work was not recognised. They were both members of the satellite ePortfolio community.

As these relationships developed members of ILE were seen as peripheral and not needed however as those relationship developed the mentors also became frustrated with the mentees as the mentees were not doing what the mentors expected of them and mentees became frustrated with the mentors for telling them what they must do. In the final evaluations of the Pathfinder Project these two relationships were expressed as the least satisfactory by the participants to the evaluators and have demonstrated least impact within the academic disciplines. Without having designated supervisors we had no one who had a remit to intervene when relationship went off track or did not meet the expectations or needs of those involved.

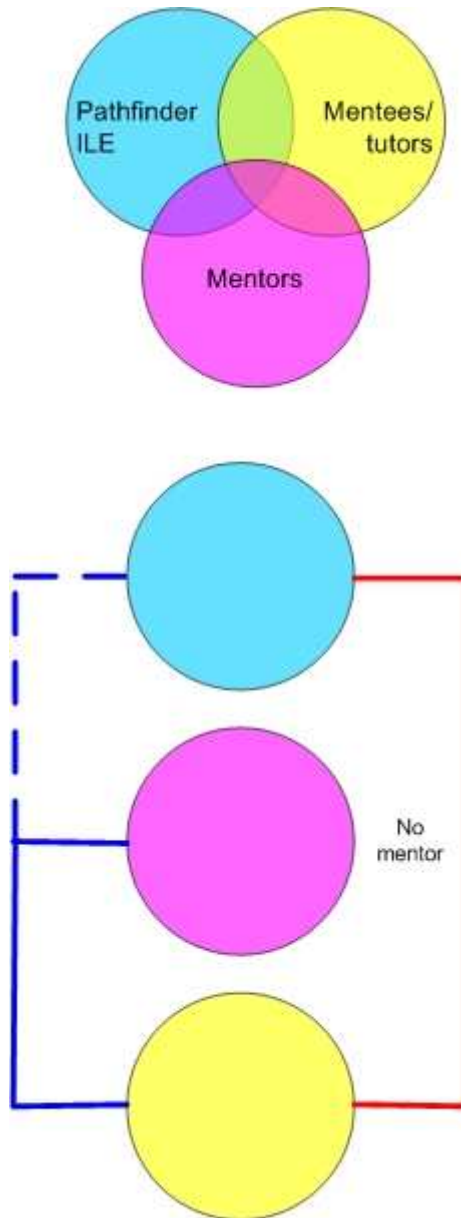


Figure 34 Tri-mentoring in the Pathfinder Project.

5.2.5 Training

As mentioned previously two mentors had already received specific mentor training in their disciplines, the other seven designated mentors had not. Those who had received training came with preconceived ideas on mentoring. Mentoring is also seen by some within my institution as being part of an academic role so all perceived that they had some working knowledge of mentoring.

“I feel comfortable mentoring staff, it's always been a part of my Uni role and research”. (mentor)

This role is normally seen as the lecturer being the mentor and their students as mentees or in a hierarchical structure with senior staff mentoring those lower in a discipline-based structure. An example of this would be that our university requires new and early career lecturers to take an in-service Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (P.G.Cert in L & T in HE shortened to PGCert). As a part of the course the learners have to take a year long module in which they are observed teaching. This module is supported by more experienced staff normally within their academic school as 'mentors'. Similar to the Pathfinder Project there is a role descriptor but not any real training. I think this illustrates a tendency to misuse or over use the term 'mentor' to mean anyone who helps another in a supportive way other than through teaching or training. At the launch of the Pathfinder Project which included the introduction of the concept of developmental mentoring two disciplines were unhappy with the concept that was offered. Comments such as “we already know about mentoring” and “we already do this” led to further discussion about their approaches. In this situation the term 'mentoring' seemed to be something that was almost “owned” by them and that once learnt then there was nothing more to learn. As mentioned earlier there are different requirements for different settings but I was surprised by the lack of flexibility that appears to mean for some people that there can be only one way of doing mentoring. As mentioned previously the term is used in the highest level of Professional Standards for learning and teaching in HE. However, at no point in any of the documentation is there any further clarification of the term 'mentor'; and how it is used. The acknowledgement of this Professional Standards Framework (2006) could be argued as irrelevant as there is little evidence that it has been used within the HE sector but what it does show is that mentoring is seen by key senior stakeholders as a fundamental skill for those engaged in learning and teaching, even if that acknowledgement is only on paper not in practice.

I was the only one in the Pathfinder team from ILE who had undergone any formal mentor training so there was an issue of credibility within the whole project team. To overcome this I set parameters for the mentoring relationship based on those of developmental mentoring in Megginson *et al* (2006) Table 2: 55. This was more about trying to ask the mentors to work in a particular way. A

way that gave ownership of the skills and abilities developed in the relationship to the mentees. However, the relationship must be mutually beneficial to all.

When asked, what do you see as the main benefits of the mentoring relationship between yourself and your tutors?, the following responses were received:

- M1: Difficult to answer, I have more of an academic relationship with the mentees than the model allows.
- M2: To be able to build a strong, cohesive delivery team who are confident in what they are asked to do. Build capacity in the school so they could use it for themselves in other modules.
- M3: Hope for a positive learning experience.
- M4: Learning from others and working together.
- M5: Personal development and a strengthening of personal relationships in the school, between the mentor and mentee. Peer-to-peer learning.
- M6: Confidence building; mutual support.

Though the majority of participants appreciated the clarification, what was not seen as appealing were elements of mentor training such as empathy, which as one mentor commented 'we don't need all that touchy feely bit'. This comment could either show a lack of understanding of mentor training or a previous experience that they found meaningless. Megginson *et al* (2006: 10) state that,

"mentor training can fall into three broad categories (see Megginson and Stokes 2004):

- a skills approach;
- developing a business case;
- conscious seeking out of each mentor's own way".

The comment regarding the 'touchy feelyness' could perhaps relate to developing a skills approach for the acquisition of appropriate skills for effective mentoring. I took more of a business approach trying to get 'buy-in' to this form of mentoring, values of the scheme, and the context in which the relationships were due to take place. Megginson *et al* (2006: 10) states that,

"This raises key issues of power, culture and ownership in most interventions of this type."

This is backed up by my experience. On reflection, a point to emerge from these findings, is that I could have tried a conscious seeking approach, Megginson *et al* (2006: 10) that is learner centred and tries to draw out participants existing understanding and skills of mentoring. By doing this is hoped that the mentors will appreciate and add to their existing knowledge and experience of mentoring.

"I am familiar with the concept of mentoring as it is part of my subject specialism. I have mentored staff in other roles". (mentor)

"A welcome shift from developmental model to 'team' approach". (mentor)

"My expectations [of mentoring] remain the same and my confidence in my tutor is wholly positive, we will have a 'developmental' relationship, learning as much from each other". (mentor)

While researching mentoring I spoke to a number of mentors and mentor trainers about such perceptions who each confirmed their experiences as being similar to my own. Some added that sponsorship mentoring was often seen more in America and that developmental mentoring was seen more in Europe. The cultural divides in the different approaches to mentoring is something that in my original concept I had not fully appreciated but is something that now begs consideration. The elements of developmental mentoring that particularly appealed to me appeared to link well to developing an engagement with PDP and were around mutual growth, personal insights and personal development.

I felt that those who got least out of the mentoring relationship were those mentors who did not see this mutual growth but considered that they were imparting their expertise to others less knowledgeable than themselves. What colleagues valued were:

"Time and focus. By have a mentor time has to be awarded to the project - time is ring-fenced because meetings are booked. I have also shared in M's enthusiasm - shared aspirations are also important". (mentee)

"being able to have someone to bounce ideas off of. Working with someone who is as enthusiastic as you are in wanting to see the module to its completion". (mentee)

“A fresh perspective on ideas I have had. Constructive criticism of initial ideas. Sharing experiences (good and bad) Sharing enthusiasm”. (mentee)

“I read somewhere that M (I think) felt that he/she had to give me 'permission' to have a go at the ePDP. But, really what I needed was technical know-how and somebody to say, you have the ideas and we can back you up with information and technology. I need a mentor that says if it goes pear-shaped, I'm here and we're in it together”. (mentee)

From observations made at the retreats it appeared that for some early adaptors this project did not work for them as they felt that their colleagues were not doing things in the way they wanted. I think the fault lies in my failure to take specific action to go into detail about developmental mentoring concepts, or to challenge people's existing notions of mentoring.

Mentoring was seen as desirable but mentees felt that the differences between more of a sponsorship approach and a developmental approach had not been understood or accepted. What is also of interest was that those subject areas who were earlier adopters of the ePortfolio system and were highly respected for their work, however their practice put people off, as people thought they had to be like them to succeed. I don't think that by being part of the Pathfinder Project mentors' perceptions of mentoring changed, but it did change the perceptions of their mentees, particularly when they were able to meet with and discuss what they wanted to do with colleagues from different subjects and schools.

5.2.6 The mentoring process

In previous research we had already used retreats to develop eLearning skills however follow-up evaluations showed that there was rapid fading of the enthusiasm, skills and abilities learnt at these events. I hoped that by using the five stages or phases, that Megginson *et al* (2006:19-21) describe as the basis for three retreats I could keep the staff engagement through the development of meaningful relationship towards a successful conclusion. Therefore in Retreat 1 the main aims and activities were about building rapport and setting direction. Retreat 2 on progression and Retreat 3 activities revolved around winding up and moving on. The use of the stages for the different retreats and their

activities was one of the most successful elements that has come out of using the mentoring concept. In both the internal and external evaluations participants commented on the fact that at the outset of the project they could see that there was a rationale for each retreat stage. That they could see a change in who facilitated the retreats, what activities were to take place and that each would be different (See Appendices 2: 221, 3: 224 and 4: 226)

“A very good way of getting people from different disciplines together and learn about different ways of going about ePDP”. (mentee)

The idea of taking people away from the University environment was to enable people to concentrate on the task they were being asked to do without any distractions from colleagues, students or their email. People were able to compare their school and subject cultures, sometimes favourably and sometimes not.

“The retreat was useful for bringing mentors and those being mentored together to identify practical/realistic solutions to some of the issues identified as being a threat to the use of PebblePad®”. (mentor)

At the time of the Pathfinder Project there were ten academic schools (since then this has been reduced to eight through major restructuring). What the residential events and in particular the discussion and debates raised, were the differences between each school’s culture though all were working for the same institution. A key element of the whole project was to develop a sustainable community of practice that was founded in retreat 1; this will be discussed further in a separate part of this chapter.

Retreat 1 (Appendix 2: 221) was about rapport building and then setting direction. As mentioned previously there were issues relating to the designated mentors that were addressed at this retreat which culminated with compromises and re-matching of mentees. The open and relaxed nature of the retreats, away from institutional constraints, facilitated discussion and dialogue which meant that by the end of this retreat the mentees knew who would be supporting them and in most cases what they (the mentees) wanted to achieve. When asked, after retreat 1, what do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of the retreat model of staff development compared to the traditional in house staff development? What would you change? The responses included:

- M1: Advantageous if all the team were here for all the retreat. Why couldn't the tutors have input into how they were to be mentored? And why not invite them to the meal? Social Learning Anyone?
- M2: Nothing. It helps to get away into a different and more relaxed environment. Get lots done without interruption.
- M3: Off campus! Enables colleagues to focus. Change – less food, more tea!
- M4: The added focus of being isolated from normal work. I wouldn't change anything.
- M5: ☺ Away from distractions and allowed to concentrate on the tasks, invaluable!
- M6: The opportunity to immerse oneself in a problem issue etc. in a congenial and sociable environment is fantastic.

The activities that happened at this retreat placed an emphasis on dialogue, both face-to-face and online using the ePortfolio system. The ePortfolio system was used for two main purposes, firstly, to up-skill those involved in the project in the use of the software and secondly to allow different relationships to develop in 'safe' environments. The first environment being a space for mentors to share their thoughts and views with fellow mentors the Pathfinder team (Figure 28: 132, Figure 29: 133) and the second to collaborate with discipline colleagues to reflect on the mentoring relationship as it progressed (Figure 26: 131).

"The relationship with my tutor [mentee] has been strengthened and our shared enthusiasm has been revealed due to the retreat programme elements". (mentor)

To make sure that the retreat was seen as the start of a relationship which had continuing responsibilities once the retreat was over I finished the programme with a goal setting activity that would be taken forward from the end of this retreat towards reporting on progress at the next retreat four months later. Over this interim period the relationships developed within the academic disciplines with outside support from the Pathfinder team in a tri-mentoring relationship.

The second retreat (Appendix 3: 224) was aimed at sharing the progress made with all Pathfinder Project participants as a way of gaining mutual learning. I designed the retreat so that the mentees presented their work supported by

their mentors. This worked in all but two cases, both of those were presented by the mentor who introduced the work of the mentees. Neither of these bought into a concept of developmental mentoring. Following on from this retreat participants were aware that the final retreat 3 (Appendix 4: 226) would be the last in this project and would review and celebrate what had been achieved (winding up), would look at key messages from the project and would move the relationship that had been developed on to a different basis. In retreat 3 the people who had moved the furthest were the mentees. Six mentees who were new to ePortfolio based learning have gone on to mentor colleagues in their academic schools.

The use of the five phases in the developmental model to structure three retreats has since been used in other projects. Colleagues comments that:

“I liked the retreat structure as I could clearly see what was expected of me”. (mentee)

“I could see that I would be expected, at the outset, to go through a process that has a start, middle and end ... I knew I had to make a commitment to the end or there was no point starting”. (mentee)

“I really appreciated meeting with people from different schools – it’s amazing you think you work for one organisation but different areas seem to do things SO differently”. (mentee)

“Chatting to others in a relaxed place makes you realise that other people are going through the same issues as you, but normally I wouldn’t meet many if any, people out of my own subject”. (mentee)

5.2.7 Final reflections on the use of a developmental mentoring model

At the end of the Pathfinder Project all participants were asked to reflect on what were both the positive and negative issues in using a developmental mentoring model, reflections received included,

Positive:

"The developmental mentoring model applied well to our Pathways project. Mentor and mentees jointly developed an appreciation and understanding of how best to use PebblePad© in the modules. As mentees suggested directions they would like to take, I learnt how best to do this in PebblePad© and developed the material for staff to use in their modules". (mentor)

"Mentoring is fab! So much better than a course if you are mentored by the right people - I was!". (mentee)

"The positives of mentoring colleagues to use any e-technology are that less confident users have a trusted colleague to develop their knowledge and skills". (mentor)

Negative:

"The developmental model was imposed on us rather than discussed and transcended by mentor/mentee. We succeeded in spite of it". (mentor)

"My mentees and I negotiated our own model(s) I wouldn't say that we followed the model suggested. I do think that a more interesting approach would have been to have open and reflective discussions about mentoring models and approaches much earlier in the project". (mentor)

There were also a number of final reflections that related more to what could be classed as management issues.

"Mentoring is successful only if it supports the learning process and this requires a considerable time commitment on both sides". (mentor)

"In theory it's fine, but often the reality is that everyone is so busy you can't get hold of them when you need help urgently". (mentee)

"Mentoring worked fine until workloads hit towards middle/end of semester 2 - at that point we lost contact (mostly my fault I am sure)". (mentee)

"Many of the mentors for this project seemed as new to it (and new to mentoring) as the tutors, I would suggest full training in both areas, and use of experts as mentors". (mentor)

"Mentoring is a good idea but I believe all tutors and, particularly mentors should have had much more information on the underpinning literature and case studies which are out there". (mentee)

The final word on the concept of using developmental mentoring should go to one of the mentors who at the start of the project voiced considerable disquiet about the concept and its use:

"I've loved working with my mentees, their enthusiasm has been infectious and inspiring and I have felt privileged to have the opportunity to engage with them. I do feel that the project has legitimised PebblePad© learning although as I said earlier unless there is support and acknowledgement from the senior managers much of this activity will continue to be under the radar. I have learnt how to better share digital spaces with colleagues and I feel that I have learnt to let go and let my mentees find their digital selves/voices. I have learnt how to be a more effective ePortfolio teacher as I have again taken some risks and I have learnt so much from my learners I think that this project should be seen as a springboard for a much larger, co-ordinated and centrally funded whole-first year project". (mentor)

5.3 Communities of practice

One of the key questions raised by my research was:

Is there a way of working that would develop relationships and understanding between like-minded but disparate groups who are all trying to achieve the same end?

At the start of my project I saw this question relating particularly to the emergent ePortfolio community (Figure 3: 20) and how this entity could be recognised and what, if any, relationship could be formed within the existing Learning and Teaching Holon (Figure 2: 18). Checkland with others (1990, 2006) identifies a human activity system as a purposeful 'holon', something that is a whole or entity in its own right but that exists as part of a bigger system. I would argue that this is similar to Wenger's (1998:45) description of a community of practice,

"These practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. It makes sense, therefore, to call these kinds of communities *communities of practice*".

What gives cohesion to the community within my project is that all the members want to offer opportunities for their students to engage in PDP, this is the shared purposeful activity and shared enterprise. Over the course of my research the community of practice has been constantly moving and changing. At times it has felt like trying to hold eels. In addition to the concept of purposeful activity what appeals about the notion of a community of practice is that this is an entity that is also learning and evolving as it develops. Looking back at my original semi-structured interviews I asked the question, how are members of staff engaging in PDP? (for themselves and for their learning and teaching). In the responses there was agreement on the following:

- 'time' was a factor for not doing their own PDP,
- that the University should value PDP more that it did then,
- that the University should recognise PDP and CPD activity for staff,
- where there was a professional requirement then staff undertook their own PDP but there was some scepticism about the level of engagement

As stated previously (2.2.5 Local staff development issues: 45) the QAA *et al* (2001:14 point 47) suggest that,

“Students are more likely to value PDP if they see that academic staff themselves are involved in PDP processes”.

What the Pathfinder Project did was to give a recognised space and time for staff to engage in their own PDP and CPD. Members of staff became learners in a social learning environment.

Wenger (1998:73) offers a model of the dimensions of practice that gives cohesion to a community of practice (Figure 35: 161).

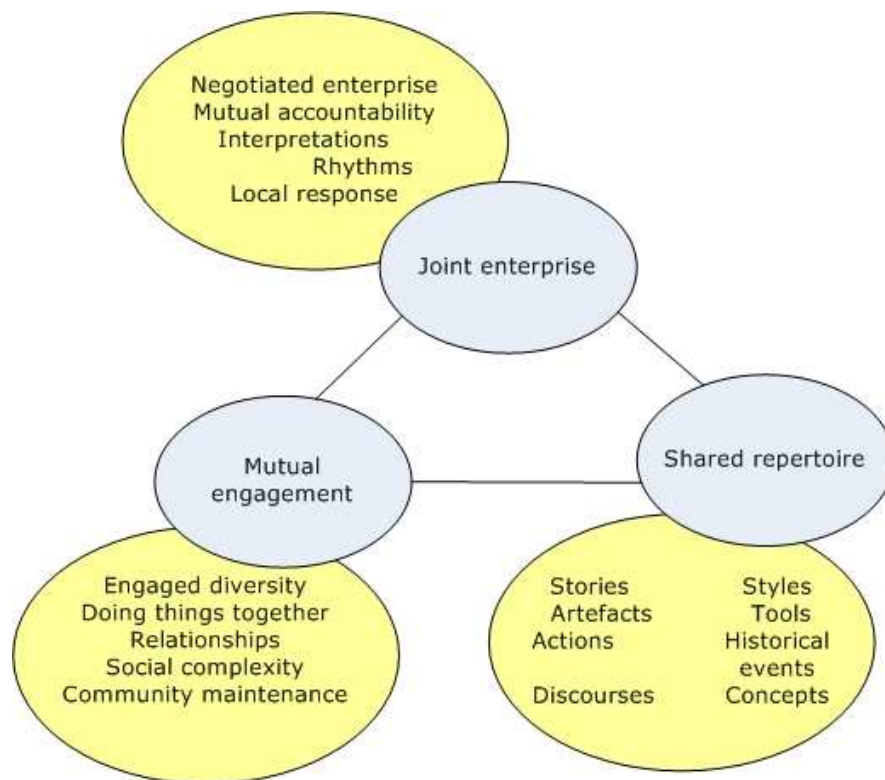


Figure 35 Wenger's (1998: 73) dimensions of practice as the property of a community

Judging the Pathfinder Project against Wenger's model there is a close match for those who engaged fully with the project. The model also highlights where those who did not fully participate were not classed as members of the community of practice. So for example, the mentor who did not turn up or was late for the first retreat would already be missing the shared repertoire and mutual engagement.

I believe that it is also important for my project to link the methodology used, SSM, with the concept of a community of practice. SSM has an empathy with and enables engagement with both the topic of my research and the activities that took place. For example, Analysis 2 (social) in SSM deals with roles, norms and values that is similar to the dimensions which enable social engagement as outlined by Wenger. Within SSM discussion, debate and the respect for different worldviews is within a shared repertoire.

It is inevitable that as I have been heavily influenced by Wenger (1998) I found it useful to use some of his structure and headings to frame my findings.

5.3.1 Learning

Wenger (1998: 4) offers a conceptual perspective for a social theory of learning that starts with four premises.

“We are social beings. Far from being trivially true, this fact is a central aspect of learning.

Knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to valued enterprises – such as [...]

Knowing is a matter of participating in the pursuit of such enterprises, that is, of active engagement in the world.

Meaning – our ability to experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful – is ultimately what learning is to produce”.

Wenger (1998:4) states that, *the primary focus of this theory is on learning as social participation*. One of the main aspects of the Pathfinder Project was to create a social environment for learning to take place. Another key theme was the use of developmental mentoring to give a structured framework for the social interaction between all participants so that a sense of belonging to a cohesive group could be sustained throughout the length of the project. In previous staff development initiatives where retreats were used this did not happen and staff commented on the rapid fading of knowledge and the fact that when they returned to their discipline-based duties the learning gained was often put to one side as “life got in the way”.

When that social interaction broke down or was seen as unequal e.g. more of a sponsorship mentoring approach was used, participants disengaged with the activities and in two cases dropped out of the project.

In the first Pathfinder retreat, the social participation was a key aim to build rapport between all those involved. Those who for whatever reason did not attend were never able to gain full entry into the project. This also followed through into the identity that other participants gave them once the project activities stopped and became part of the mainstream learning and teaching operations as an element within the Blended Learning Strategy. What the Pathfinder Project did, by using a mix of retreats and developmental mentoring, was to offer an environment that complemented and enabled learning.

In my conceptual model I was hoping that by using developmental mentoring both technical and pedagogic skills would be shared and developed in a way that did not mean they had to be directly taught but would naturally occur as an enabling dialogue between various team members. This would involve a sharing of both individual and collective experiences in formal and informal settings. The informal settings, such as in the evening and over meal breaks were often the most rich environments as members of the teams broke into social groupings rather than in the formal settings where they were more discipline-based. A key success factor of the retreats, but one which is difficult to quantify, is the time and space they provided for informal learning. In the current climate of cuts and reduction in funding then to be seen to pay for people to go away for staff development particularly if it involves a stay in a nice hotel can hit the headlines.

For those, for whatever reason, e.g. family commitments, who are not able to participate in the social setting then consideration needs to be given to how they can gain membership of the community that might have moved on. For example, I observed a mentor working with two mentees, one of whom could not stay overnight. In the previous afternoon the mentor was in three-way dialogue with both mentees. The now two-way conversation carried on into the evening. By the start of the next formal session on the next day the three-way dialogue had changed into two separate conversations. I noticed what had happened so as the organisers of the retreat we added an extra slot into the programme to encourage teams to share their experiences and to start community dialogues again. Through the types activities in the Pathfinder Project I was seeking to find a way of working that would develop relationships and understanding between

like-minded but disparate groups who were all trying to achieve the same end creating a sense of identity and community. This was done to ultimately develop an understanding of how we (ILE) and the discipline-based staff perceive ourselves. As Knight and Trowler (2001:101) comment,

“Learning takes place within communities of practice and activity systems that have their own sub-cultures and discursive repertoires”.

The Pathfinder Project was one way of helping to evolve a community and activity system. The sub-cultures I would identify as being primarily based around such elements as disciplines areas and physical locations e.g. disciplines based on a specific campus.

Wenger offers a model of the components of a social theory of learning (Figure 36: 164) that I see as pulling together what I was hoping to achieve.

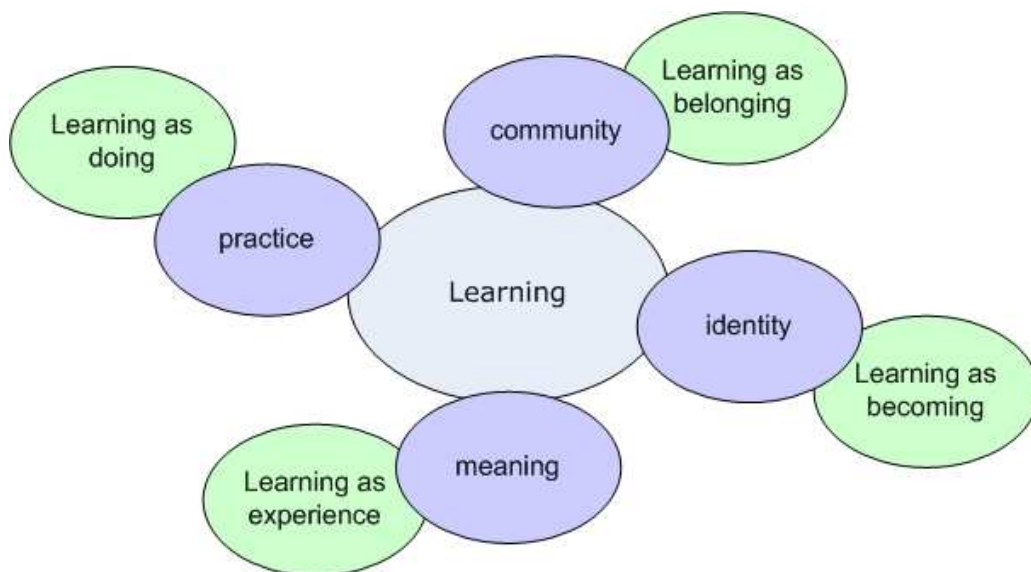


Figure 36 Wenger's (1998:5) components of a social theory of learning: an initial inventory

Looking at the Wenger model I was struck by a synergy between the elements and the characteristics of developmental mentoring (Figure 37: 165). In my project the conceptual model of developmental mentoring in a tri-mentoring relationship is obvious as it was tested in a real world comparison through a given internal and external identity – the Pathfinder Project. However, once that project finished the community of practice, though still in existence, is much less

obvious. One of the reasons for this is that as the Pathfinder Project completed its funding cycle. The participants lost their unique identity with the created community of practice becoming disparate, subtle and mainstream. Some participants retired and others moved into different roles within their discipline.

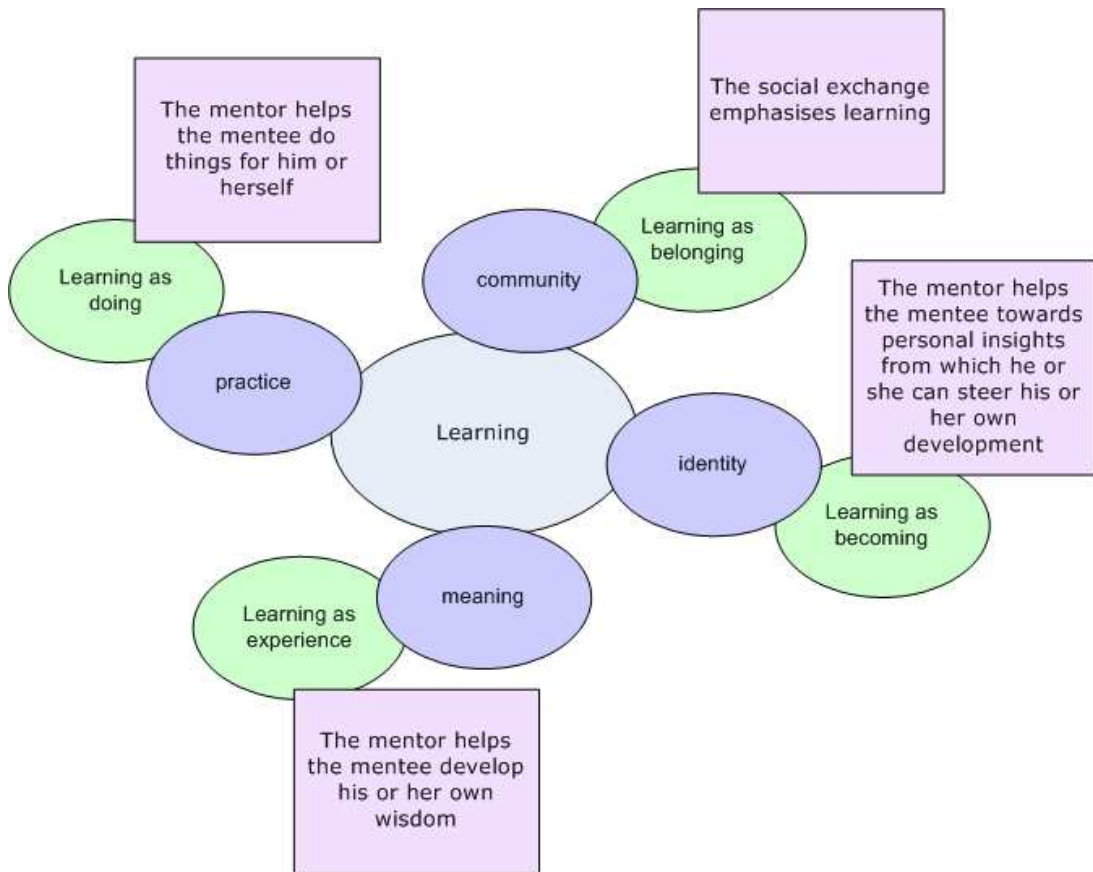


Figure 37 Wenger with characteristics of developmental mentoring

5.3.2 Negotiating meaning

At the start of my project there was a real sector-wide push on PDP and a genuine excitement over new products that could support this process. People were developing different pedagogical approaches for ePortfolio based learning. Over the course of my research the Blended Learning Strategy (2008) has changed the emphasis placed on one particular issue and has encompassed other learning opportunities delivered through a wide range of different technologies not just ePortfolio based learning. It has therefore substantially widened its remit in comparison to the Pathfinder Project,

“The overarching aims of this strategy [Blended Learning] are to enhance student learning and to improve each student’s learning experience. The student entitlements directly address mechanisms for engagement with learning opportunities (2, 3, 4 and 6), based on current research and theoretical understanding of how technology can improve learning, as well as the use of technology to make students’ interaction with the University easier (1 and 5). These are the six student entitlements.

All our students are entitled to:

1. have access where possible to an electronic copy of all lecturer-produced course documents e.g. module guides, assessment briefs, presentations, handouts, and reading lists
2. formative assessment/s opportunities on-line with appropriate meaningful electronic assessment feedback;
3. have opportunities to collaborate on-line with others in their learning cohort;
4. have the opportunity to participate in electronic Personal Development Planning (ePDP);
5. submit all appropriate assessments on-line;
6. opportunities to engage in interactive learning during all face to face sessions”.

With PDP becoming part of a much wider initiative the research questions that I am trying to address still stand but also now encompass more than PDP. At the start of my project I stated that this was not about PDP but that PDP was the ‘topic’ or product that gave focus to my work. In particular highlighting my question:

How can this inform my work-practices as a member of a central department working with teaching staff delivering the student experience?

The community of practice that I started with has morphed into a wider community of blended learning practice. This is primarily in response to a change in the sector and the organisational strategy (Blended Learning Strategy 2008). Wenger (1998:7-8) suggests rethinking learning that places the focus on participation has meaning for individuals, communities and organisations.

“For organisations, it means that learning is an issue of sustaining the interconnected communities of practice through which an organisation knows what it knows and thus becomes effective and valuable as an organisation”.

I would argue that this has happened within the University of Wolverhampton with the creation of the Blended Learning Unit, which has drawn on the Tripartite model of developmental mentoring as outline in my research (Figure 34: 150).

The Blended Learning Unit is part of ILE but has a distinct role and identity. All members of the unit are proficient in a full range of technologies including the use of the ePortfolio system. The blended learning approach is one that asks discipline-based staff what they want their learners to achieve and then works with those staff to find the most appropriate way for both the lecturers and students to develop this.

In informal discussions, some discipline-based colleagues have voiced their concerns about the creation of a central unit for blended learning. Some see this as a retrograde step back to when their innovative work was not recognised or rewarded. For some this has meant disengagement with the community as they no longer feel part of or want to be part of the evolution of an internal community of practice. Despite this, they may still engage with external communities of practice to which they feel an affinity. Argyris and Schön (1996: 7) suggest that,

“ ... we might think of a cluster of individual members as the agents who learn “for” the larger organization to which they belong. [...] Yet the learning outcomes generated by a group of individuals may not be diffused throughout the larger organization. And even when the results of a group’s investigation are broadly diffused, they may not enter into the stream of debates and deliberations that affect an organization’s policies, programs or practices”.

If the community of ePortfolio-based practice wants to influence institutional policy and practice it might need the central department to get its voice heard. Within the hierarchical structure of my university ILE have an established central role in negotiating meaning and helping those from different disciplines come to

an accommodation that may ultimately affect strategic direction, policy and practice. We can be an advocate for that accommodation on behalf of 'others' and ourselves. This would change the concept of a 'community of practice' into a 'community of inquiry'. Argyris and Schön (1996: 33) see this as either an individual or a joint process of inquiry that happens within an organisation. They further suggest that,

"Inquiry becomes organizational when individuals' inquiry on behalf of the organization, within a community of inquiry governed, formally or informally, by the roles and rules of the organization".

I would see this shift from a 'community of practice' to a 'community of inquiry' as key to work-based learning and for defining action for improvement.

The negotiated organisational learning is contextualised by different disciplines for meaningful practice. For that to happen, then those involved in that practice must be encouraged to be reflexive, classed by Argyris and Schön (1996: 21) as double-loop learning, practice informing institutional policy, which in turn informs practice. I believe that ILE needs to define a role for itself that communicates to discipline-based staff a willingness to assist in practice informing policy. I would suggest that this role might be one of brokering. Wenger (1998: 108) offers a definition of brokering as some one who has,

"... multimembership to transfer some element of one practice into another ..."

He further states that,

"Brokers are able to make new connections across communities of practice, enable coordination, and – if they are good brokers – open new possibilities for meaning".

Other elements of Wenger's definition of brokering that I see as relevant are the ability to link and facilitate interactions between practices, that a broker is not a passive role but one that is participatory. It requires a flexible and agile approach that can recognise and work within different cultural contexts. I would see this role as adding to the Wenger/Meggison model the concept of mutual growth. If learning is a social enterprise then it should be something that

enriches all participants. Therefore, there is no such thing as a facilitative teacher that drives a learner (Cowan 2006) but perhaps a broker? I will pick this issue up again when looking at my own stances and orientations to educational development. Wenger (1998:9) highlights,

“A key implication of our attempts to organize learning is that we must become reflective with regard to our discourses of learning and to their effects on the ways we design for learning”.

This is supported by my findings related to the cultural desirability; staff valued the process of reflection and the time and space for dialogue with colleagues.

In comparison, within my initial semi-structured interviews all staff commented:

What do you see as the main benefits of the mentoring relationship between yourself and your tutors?

M2: To be able to build a strong, cohesive delivery team who are confident in what they are asked to do. Build capacity in the school so they could use it for themselves in other modules.

M3: Hope for a positive learning experience.

M4: Learning from others and working together.

M5: Personal development and a strengthening of personal relationships in the school, between the mentor and mentee. Peer to peer learning.

M6: Confidence building; mutual support.

In a follow up interview one mentor commented,

“I wonder how many of us [lecturers] see ourselves as learners? Are we always too busy offering learning to others that we forget about ourselves. I’ve valued the time to reflect ... and your gentle prodding to do so ... but I think what has been most valuable is to have a dialogue with someone about your thoughts. And hopefully feel that what you say will have some impact somewhere” (mentor)

The mentor raises some important points for the organisational structure perceived to be vertical by those who see their identity as being primarily

discipline-based. Dialogues take place within the vertical hierarchy. However, by seeing the discipline as 'learning and teaching' this transcends the vertical structure to something that is more horizontal and much more messy and unstructured. People cross boundaries when facilitated to do so. Within the Pathfinder Project the role of members of ILE was to enable discipline colleagues to cross the discipline boundaries and to create a community of practice with a shared goal or purposeful activity. The Blended Learning Unit now takes up this role, though given the major institutional changes that are taking place at the time of writing the Blended Learning Advisors tend to broker individual or joint staff exchanges rather than as members of an identifiable community of practice.

In relation to the role of a central department working with academic staff to deliver PDP as part of blended learning, I think that at the beginning we were seen as 'owning' the initiative. However, I would suggest that we (ILE) have worked hard to,

"convey a flavour of continuous interaction, of gradual achievement, and of give-and-take" (Wenger 1998: 53),

I believe that we strive to negotiate meaning rather than impose our view. As Wenger (Wenger 198: 54) states,

"Negotiated meaning is at once both historical and dynamic, contextual and unique".

The use of SSM and in particular Analyses 1, 2, and 3, along with real world comparisons to help define action for improvement complements negotiated meaning. When I chose my research methodology, I was looking for something that engaged all research participants and that allowed for individual interpretations and action.

The Pathfinder Project had a defined membership that only those invited could take part in, although blended learning it is open to all. It is and will be harder to get all staff to participate in blended learning that as Wenger (1998: 56) suggests,

"... combines doing, talking, thinking, feeling and belonging".

Due to the University-wide initiative, Learning Works, (which includes simplifying course structures, clarifying course content and reviewing all course titles) that will offer a new undergraduate curriculum for the majority of courses at the start of the academic year 2010/2011, this has been an ideal time and space to gain staff participation. Learning Works has meant that instead of ILE starting and steering conversations these have happened within academic disciplines. In some cases, ILE has been included as an equal partner in the debates, but not in all. When discussing with ILE colleagues how they felt about the different approaches taken by different academic disciplines, some reported that they were welcome to take part in debates and discussions, they felt more confident that the discipline had really tried to engage with the aims of Learning Works. On the other hand, those excluded or marginalised felt the opposite. I was fortunate to be fully included in the two academic schools that I liaise with, feeling that I am a member of those schools, and hold an identity within their community of practice. Wenger define this as an "identity of participation" (Wenger 1998: 56). As an active participant, I know that I have also acted as an advocate for my schools, (a telling use of language in MY schools) as I have felt able to share their good practice with others both within my central department and in wider forums.

Elkjaer, (2003: 15) offers a 'third way' of looking at organisational learning that I believe offers a more appropriate view of the organisational learning experience throughout my project. She offers a table (Table 3: 172) that outlines her view of the differences between the knowledge acquisition metaphor (Elkjaer 2003: 6-7), the participation metaphor (Elkjaer 2003: 7-8) and her concept of 'the third way'. I believe that 'the third way' method for organisational learning - '*Inquire to acquire*', thinking as a tool for acting and reflection as necessary for learning are demonstrated in both the design and delivery of the Pathfinder Project and followed through in my project. These concepts are also complimentary to the aspirations of mode 2 SSM.

Another characteristic that I see as vital is that 'the third way' does not separate out individual learning and organisational learning from each other. Elkjaer (2003: 16) concludes that,

"Thus, the 'third way' includes action and thinking as well as system and collective. The pattern of the latter is, however, derived from the actions and transactions of organizational life and world. The 'both-and' is not

intended to appeal to harmony and consensus but to avoid trying to change organizations by either changing systems or individuals and instead include both at the same time”.

This conclusion encompasses the notion of reaching an accommodation and change that is both desirable and feasible to individuals and the organisation in which their roles, norms and values are based within.

	The knowledge acquisition metaphor	The participation metaphor	The 'third way'
The content & purpose of the process of learning	Acquisition of knowledge about practice. Abstract thinking before concrete action.	Become a practitioner, a member of a community of practice.	Development of experience. Related to concrete problems at work.
Method	Teaching. Learning as a separate activity.	One learns as a part of the participation in the community of practice.	<i>'Inquire to acquire'</i> Thinking as a tool for acting. Reflection as necessary for learning.
Individual – organization	Separate. How to transfer from individual to organization?	Woven together.	Inseparable. Individuals and organizations are both products and producers of human beings and knowledge.
Institutional & organizational context	Individual and system	Culture, collective	Social world

Table 3 Organizational learning as knowledge acquisition, participation and the 'third way'

5.3.3 Applying the concept of reification

As the debate around blended learning has progressed the identification of 'ePortfolio' as a separate entity has now become subsumed into ePortfolio-based learning. This I would see as moving debate of the functionality of a piece of software to pedagogy. At the start of my project, I identified an emergent community of practice around the use of the ePortfolio tool and my project looked for a concept that would engage this community giving it a recognition that it perceived did not previously exist in any formal way. Wenger (1998: 57) might have defined this as 'reification'. Wenger uses Webster's definition of reification:

"... to treat (an abstraction) as substantially existing, or as a concrete material object".

When reflecting on my project, the ePortfolio software became an entity that has given a reason for a community to exist when in fact what we were in essence looking at was how best we might get our students to engage with learning. The tool we used to do this, though not irrelevant, was or should have been secondary; process before product. However, the tool gave a distinct identity for a community to come together. In addition it gave a new focus for funding applications, as Wenger (1998: 58) says

"... we create points of focus around which negotiation of meaning becomes organised".

He goes on to say that,

"Having a tool to perform an activity changes the nature of that activity."

This is exactly what happened within my project. At the very start of the finding out stage during the semi-structured interviews staff members all believed that students would not undertake PDP activities unless they happened as part of the taught curriculum. Staff felt that they needed to take a proactive role in making this happen. PebblePad© at this time was offered to all staff and students as an individual learning space that occupied a different role to the virtual learning environment (VLE) seen as a managed learning space to support teaching. With a change of perception from PDP being something that was left for individuals to

engage with by themselves, to one that the institution felt obliged to encourage, then the PDP activities became part of the taught curriculum. This obligation seemed very real in 2005/06. At the time during national events such as the CRA residential seminars, most people perceived that after 2005 institutions could be judge on their PDP provision though this did not happen post 2005 (see Appendix 5: 228). The QAA *et al* Guidelines (2001) show how at the time the need to provide a process for PDP and evidence of this process through personal development records (PDR) seemed to be very high profile and powerful, something that institutions could not ignore. I would argue that this created the climate and environment for the emergent ePortfolio community of practice. Wenger (1998: 61) states that,

“A good tool can reify an activity so as to amplify its effects while making the activity effortless”.

I believe that in part this is what happened, although question the notion that the ‘tool’ has made the activity effortless.

One final word on reification from Wenger (1998: 61) that I see as relevant over the lifespan of my project,

“The evocative power of reification is thus double-edged. Classifying people under broad categories can focus attention on a kind of diversity, but the reification can give differences and similarities a concreteness they do not actually process.”

As the use of the ePortfolio system moves from something that is innovative and new to a mainstream activity the developing community of practice also evolved into a different entity. I believe that initially we needed something with a distinct identity to create a focus for new pedagogic approaches but once those approaches were tested, refined and became available to all the need for a distinct community of practice became less important. Developmental mentoring expanded the capacity for this type of learning across a wider set of different disciplines.

5.3.4 Concepts of identity – learning communities

Wenger (1998:148) offers detailed discussions of issues of identity that include, identity in practice, identities of participation and non-participation, modes of belonging, identification and negotiability and learning communities. Identity in practice, identities of participation and non-participation, modes of belonging, identification and negotiability have to a greater or lesser extent been discussed as part of this chapter already however the concept of learning communities needs to be addressed in relation to the SSM stage, 'defining action for improvement' and also links to the notion of a 'community of inquirers'.

By taking part in both my research and the Pathfinder Project, all participants will have changed in some way. Whether through the acquisition of competences or the creation of knowledge, we will have all learnt something. Wenger (1998: 215) suggests that,

"We accumulate skills and information, not in the abstract as ends in themselves, but in the service of an identity."

For myself, my identity includes being a practitioner/researcher. The nature of the work-based learning that I am undertaking includes not just the process of change that I am undergoing but also the place, environment, culture and time in which I am able to do this. I can appreciate that I am part of a number of learning communities, as a participant within the Pathfinder Project, as a member of the CRA, as a member of ILE and as a member of my University. What each offer is a context for development. I personally feel that the experiences and knowledge I have to offer will be valued in at least one if not all communities.

Wenger (1998: 215) suggests that learning communities can offer a personal trajectory for participants,

"... a community can strengthen the identity of participation of its members in two related ways:

1. by incorporating its members' past into its history – that is, by letting what they have been, what they have done, and what they know contribute to the constitution of its practice
2. by opening trajectories of participation that place engagement in its practice in the context of a valued future."

By using the concept of developmental mentoring, I hoped to address some of these issues. On reflection, Wenger's first point I would argue is met within the Pathfinder Project, the second issue is more contentious. The second issue at present seems heavily reliant on external sector-wide and in particular national economic growth issues. The second issue also centres around what a participant may see as a valued future. For example, for some the chance to take part in changing practice is a real opportunity to make a difference but for others this is something on top of what they are already doing. I have observed both of these views expressed by discipline-based staff as part of the Learning Works initiative. Where there has been dissent expressed it has often been couched in terms of "we weren't consulted", "our expertise has been ignored", "we are not listened to" and "we have been excluded". Whether this has been the case or not the perception exists. In this scenario, participants have not seen their identity or self identify aligned with the activity and have disengaged.

5.4. Academics responding to change: an educational developer's point of view

As a practitioner/researcher, client, owner, and navigator of SSM, the interpretation of the findings are within the context of my own orientations to and perceptions of my working environment. Checkland and Poulter (2006: 55) state that the purpose of debate and discussion in SSM is not one of *consensus* but is more subtle and uses the concept of *accommodation*. I would therefore see my role as one that 'brokers' an accommodation. For this to happen there needs to be an acknowledgement of the different worldviews expressed. My worldview is coloured by my educational development role and such structures, tensions and influences that I perceived within that role as outlined in Figure 10: 43 and Figure 11: 44. Within these images, I identify a landscape indicating a need to consider elements such as accountability, both internally and externally, for PDP activities and increased use of learning technologies, in this case, the use of an ePortfolio system. In the latter part of my project I have placed greater emphasis on blended learning including ePortfolio-based learning within the context of the Learning Works initiative. Land (2004) suggests such issues demonstrate a changing landscape for HE that has also seen the growth of educational development. As Land (2004: 7) states,

“Assisting academic colleagues in getting to grips with new technologies at the levels of skills development, electronic courseware and materials development, design and delivery of online programmes and strategic aspects of implementing learning technology at institutional level, has been a major strand in the multiple narratives that constitute the rise of educational development in UK higher education.”

Both within my images and in the Pathfinder Project, key stakeholders, ‘others’ and myself see my role as one that negotiates meaning between sector-wide and institutional agendas for PDP and discipline-based academics. Land (2004: 21) suggests that situations such as this,

“... require developers to be able to manage multiple perceptions of their role and to interpret practices and meanings upwards and downwards within organisations”.

This is a view that I would concur with and is one that is compatible with the role that my ILE colleagues and I undertook within the Pathfinder Project and within the tri-mentoring model. This can be seen as a privileged position, as one interviewee commented,

“I’m trusting you to look at the relevant policies and guidelines for PDP and give me the heads-up about what I have to do. I’m too busy teaching to investigate relevant theories I need you to give me ideas and examples and then support me with what I want to do with my students” (E)

5.4.1 Land’s orientations to educational development

Land (2004) offers 12 orientations to educational development based on interviews with practising educational developers. He shows a ‘fragmented community of practice’ (Land, 2004:12) with differing orientations,

“ ... *orientation* is chosen to imply a way of making sense of a given situation or set of tasks that subsequently informs and influences action. [...] a practitioner may [...] adopt differing orientations in different strategic context.”

I have taken the 12 headings that Land (2004) offers and represented them as points on compass (Figure 38: 178).

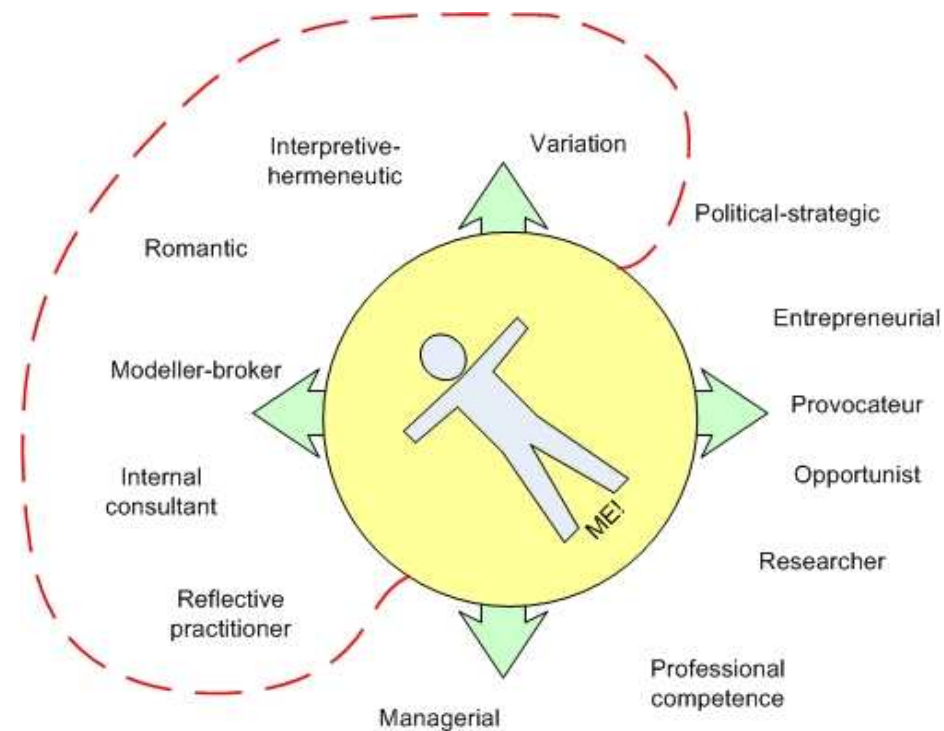


Figure 38 An interpretation of Land's (2004) orientations to educational development

One of the reasons for doing this was to see how my own orientations as an educational developer have affected the concept model that I offered to my discipline-based colleagues and how this may have influenced the whole approach taken to both the Pathfinder Project and my doctoral research. It is through the discourses that have taken place throughout my project that I have tried to review my own orientations and how they affect my views of academic colleagues' responses to change. I see them also as relevant for addressing the multifaceted role of being a practitioner/researcher.

It is not my intention to go into detail about each of the different orientations that Land (2004) offers but to concentrate on three orientations that are particularly relevant firstly, interpretive-hermeneutic, secondly modeller-broker and thirdly reflective practitioner. I see these three orientations as having the greatest impact on my work though I have also ring-fenced other orientations that I identify with to a lesser extent.

5.4.1.1 Interpretive-hermeneutic

Land (2004: 108) uses a definition by Webb (1996a: 66) of hermeneutics as being in its simplest form,

“A conversational kind of process in which the interpreter learns by adjusting his or her perspective. It necessitates entry to the inner world of the thing or person to be understood – the ‘other’”.

Using SSM requires active participation by key stakeholders throughout the process, for example, when constructing a rich picture or undertaking real world comparisons or coming to an accommodation for action. In both Land (2004) and Checkland and Poulter (2006), emphasis is placed on flexibility, dialogues and subtle relationships between parties. With this orientation, there is a need for mutual understanding of each other’s worldviews to allow for participants from both sides to modify and adapt their views and attitudes. A recurring theme within both the Pathfinder Project and focus groups for my doctoral investigation was a perception from academics that ILE did not fully appreciate what it was like for them and vice versa. The interpretive-hermeneutic orientation appreciates the human aspects of an interaction; the emotions, contexts and self-perceptions which are all different and equally real to each individual subjective worldview. However, it should be open and appreciative of other views. For this reason, Land (2004: 110) sees it as a reflective process for mutual development. Again, this is something that I have tried to emphasise within my project by using developmental mentoring in a tri-partite model and by using SSM. Land (2004: 113-114) raises concerns around the validity of an orientation based on dialogue or discussion but I believe that SSM can give a framework for educational development.

Land (2004: 113) suggests that this orientation,

“... requires particular interpersonal skills and a high degree of communicative competence. It is essentially ‘unscripted’, though not unplanned, and relies on intuitive understanding and thinking on one’s feet”

The attributes outlined here are ones that I feel I possess and know that I am comfortable using. This is not just a personal view; but has also been expressed

by colleagues in my department, university and by external 'others'. The characteristics expressed here are also high function skills that within my Education Psychologist's Report are traits displayed within my dyslexia assessment.

It is through reflection and a consideration of my empathy with and to this orientation that my approach to my project and the Pathfinder Project has been influenced in such a way that has played to my strengths. I offered an educational development opportunity that I was comfortable with through this orientation, without recognising that this was the case. I would do this again, but now would recognise the effect of this orientation. I would also consider how this might influence an academics' response to change by the very nature of the educational development process offered to them.

5.4.1.2 Modeller-broker

This is an orientation where the developer offers exemplars to colleagues (Land 2004: 104). This is something that I have also striven to do both directly through my own practice, by looking for internal examples from other discipline-based colleagues, and for external audiences by presenting case studies at conferences and in publications. Modelling is also a key aspect within SSM as Checkland and Poulter (2006: 22) state,

"The learning emerges via an organized process in which the real situation is explored, using as intellectual devices – which serve to provide structure to discussion – models of purposeful activity built to encapsulate pure stated world views"

The offering of models of practice was a planned activity in the Pathfinder Project, in particular in Retreat 2 and 3 and became part of the Project deliverables. Using tri-mentoring also gave me and others within ILE the opportunity to show that we could 'do' not just talk about the work of others. This appealed to me, as a means of addressing what I felt was unjustified criticism that members of ILE don't teach. It gives a credibility to my/our practice, something that Land (2004:105-106) raises as an issue faced by developers.

Apart from 'modelling' the other linked orientation is that of brokerage and this is something that has synergy with developmental mentoring, as Land (2004: 106) states,

"Putting those who might benefit in touch with those who have valuable practice to offer".

He goes on to add a qualifier that effective brokerage depends on good collaboration. This is backed-up by findings from the Pathfinder Project where the relationships that were perceived as being more effective occurred where there was good collaboration rather than an unequal balance in ownership of the experience and learning. As mentioned previously brokering is also a term used by Wenger (1998: 108) that I see as particularly relevant to both myself and my central department. I prefer the Wenger definition to that of Land's as I see the Wenger definition as including the 'broker' as an active participant not just a match-maker.

5.4.1.3 Reflective practitioner

When discussing the orientation for the reflective practitioner, Land (2004: 89) initially examines the messy and unpredictable nature of educational development initiatives; things can and do go wrong. Events can be influenced by *unique factors*. When this occurs, Land suggest that,

"They [educational developers] often turn to methods of critical incident analysis or processes of critical reflection through diarizing, logging, portfolio-building and peer support to address the ambivalent and conflicting nature of professional experience".

This approach is one that I fully recognise as something that I do in my professional life, heightened by undertaking a Doctorate in Professional Studies and by using SSM.

Land (2004: 90) raises the notion of giving time for negotiation of conflict in a dynamic process which places an emphasis on communication with others. This is one of the findings that is reported within the Pathfinder Project Executive

Report (Brett, Lawton and Purnell, 2008),

“Staff development for ePDP takes time ... more time than other ‘e’ staff development.

Staff development focused on the value and use of ePDP needs to focus firstly on the processes and value of PDP before this is translated into any kind of product. This is quite a conceptual leap having to focus away from their discipline and onto to the development of their learners’ awareness of their learning. For others who start with the technology, they need to think why their learners might need to use and what they might do. This is where the Pathfinder Project has found the work of Ward and Richardson (2007) to be useful in challenging the nature of the activities which staff create.

The project has given us the opportunity to work closely with a number of staff from across an entire discipline spectrum. Through this we [ILE] have taken on board the factors that enable and inhibit ePDP within their curriculum. We are fortunate that we have been able to gather data from both staff and students that will enable us to look at ePDP from multiple perspectives, including that of the project team who are situated in the institution’s central learning and teaching department. Members of staff need to be supported and mentored when risking the use of new pedagogies involved in a blended learning approach, and institutional cultures and infrastructures need to make space and time for colleagues to work together”.

Land (2004:91) draws on the work of Schön who is stated as suggesting that,

“The intractable nature of problems within professional practice may stem from the fact that the issues, situation or events from which they arise are characterised by any of the following features.

Complexity ... Uniqueness ... Uncertainty ... ”

The first factor, complexity is one that I identified within my project very early on and is a factor that influenced my choice of methodology. Uniqueness was definitely an element when looking at pedagogy for ePortfolio-based learning as

my university is at the cutting edge of this form of learning in the taught curriculum. The use of development mentoring was one way of trying to reduce practitioner uncertainty by providing a peer support network of like-minded individuals.

Land (2004: 94) suggests that a reflective practitioner orientation focuses on the individual and therefore their personal development. In my project and the Pathfinder Project, I see this as a benefit for all participants including myself. It also supports the ethos of developmental mentoring, as mentors need to reflect on their own practice to undertake a mentoring role. Being reflexive was a 'skill' that was required from all taking part in the Pathfinder Project though Land (2004: 95) raises concerns regarding the competences that people have to be reflexive. I would agree with this view and would see my use of a scaffolded web folio template (Figure 27: 131) as one way of trying to prompt reflection for action. I hoped that by getting both mentors and mentees to reflect on their experience and being able to take risks supported by a tri-partite relationship then any change in their discipline-based practice would not be seen as being imposed on them but that was something that they had created and owned.

5.4.1.4 A final word on orientations

As a practitioner/researcher reflecting on my approaches within my project, including the influence I was able to exert over the design and delivery of the Pathfinder Project, I can see that the three orientations outlined above are ones within which I had a natural and acquired empathy. The influence of my own orientations and stances is increased by the SSM methodology that I chose for my Doctoral project. I would argue therefore, from the project experience, the way that I as an educational developer present a potential change in practice cannot be separated from the way that change is accepted. If I have engaged staff in discussion and debate over that change and reached an accommodation with them on the messages to the key stakeholders then we jointly become a community of inquirers in which I see myself as a reflexive modeller-broker who interprets and presents that knowledge and experience gain by the collective.

5.4.2 Change within a hierarchical structure

I would argue that the University I work within is hierarchical (Land 2004: 172-173). The University has a clear management structure with decisions, actions and change coming through committee structures that cascade information down. From my own experience I would see that the structures are not just top down but can also receive and act upon 'grass roots' information, however, my experience is not one that all participants would identify with. Each Academic School will have similar School-based committees that reflect the university-wide structures but will also have unique interpretations in, for example, membership and terms of reference. Academic Schools may also have additional sub-groups of their own such as Learning and Teaching. As Land suggests (2004: 172), within this structure specialist departments are likely to exist such as my own – The Institute for Learning Enhancement (ILE). I perceive my role and that of ILE as being a conduit for learning and teaching development that in my project takes sector level initiatives and offers opportunities to discipline-based colleagues to develop their academic practices. The role then extends to brokering the knowledge gained both internally and externally. Though I may see our role as one that develops and supports innovation this is not one that some times 'others' within my university have seen.

"The reason we needed to set up [a group] was because the Co-ordinators weren't supportive or interested in what we were doing, we didn't fit in the system so did our own thing. Now it's popular to use an ePortfolio people want to know what we do but they weren't interested before". (I)

"I get tired of being an innovator when no-one acknowledges the blood, sweat and tears that I've been through. When something is successful people who didn't give a damn now want to get in on the act." (M)

It was comments like these that made me want to find a model of development that would recognise the work of innovators by asking them to be mentors.

At the start of my project, the context for PDP was very different to how it is now. To start with there was a strong message from sector-wide organisations such as the QAA (whether real or perceived) that led to senior management cascading this message down into learning and teaching practice. From bottom-

up, as a widening participation institution, my university had always had a strong message of personal growth and development. PDP processes were already happening though perhaps not expressed in the same terms as were suddenly used within the sector. When I ran educational development sessions on the QAA *et al* Guidelines relating to PDP the first question I was often asked would be to define the term. When I did this the response I would often get would be "but we already do this". The change in practice was more to do with making PDP explicit to students in the light of the QAA *et al* Guidelines (2001). The perception by some academics was that we (ILE) were asking them to do something new, something that was to be imposed on them and something that came from 'outside' .

Becher and Trowler (1989: 47) comment that,

"The tribe of academe, one might argue, define their own identities and defend their own patches of intellectual ground by employing a variety of devices geared to the exclusion of illegal immigrants"

It has sometimes seemed to me that as a developer I would be classed as one of the 'illegals', what right would I have to comment on, let alone get involved in something such as 'teaching'? To qualify this statement this is not an approach I have received but is one I have observed other colleagues being on the receiving end of, having a less than welcoming invitation to take part in discipline-based 'events'.

I think is important in an interpretive-hermeneutic orientation to recognise the 'cultural elements' (Becher and Trowler 1989) of the *tribe*. With the rise of educational development and learning and teaching as a discipline we, the developers, can be seen as challenging traditional territories. This challenge to traditional territories can included the work of discipline-based colleagues investigating pedagogy. Academic credit has traditionally been given to those who publish and are respected within their discipline base (Becher and Trowler 1989:76). Those people who took part in the Pathfinder Project were and are generally writing and publishing within the learning and teaching arena often through their Subject Centres which do not have the same validity in such frameworks as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). In the last RAE in 2008, learning and teaching was not recognised as a category under which a submission could be made. Any learning and teaching work had to go under

'Education'. Within the hierarchical structure of my university learning and teaching research went under the School of Educations submission rather than under one, of at the time, nine other academic schools. This lessened, in the eyes of some within the academic disciplines, the validity of the activities within the Pathfinder Project. For example,

"I felt that I was being sabotaged, I know I was off for a short time but when I got back a colleague who was supposed to be taking my class had said to the students that all this PDP stuff wasn't important. This person saw themselves as more important than me as they taught content not 'airy fairy' stuff ... I was so angry with his attitude. I never got back the same relationship I had with my students before I was off. They respected the content guy because of what he delivered – I won't say taught". (H)

"Things such as PDP are always difficult to teach, some colleague see it as taking up valuable content time in the curriculum and won't have anything to do with it. You definitely won't get those who see themselves as researchers getting involve with anything to do with learning and teaching and the student experience". (E)

These two comments also raise a lack of awareness by some discipline-based colleague of what Becher and Trowler (1989: 166) highlight as a shift in HE policies in the UK and USA from 'knowing what' to 'knowing how', this is corroborated by Knight and Trowler (2001: 100) who state that,

"Following the constructivist accounts of learning developed by Piaget and Vygotsky, we see learning as acts of sensemaking (Weick 1995) within communities of discourse. This implies that learning is much more than the energetic collection of information, although there are students and teachers who think and act as if that were the name of the game (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983; Prosser and Trigwell, 1999)".

The emphasis is not on the regurgitation of content but on its application and what sense a student can make of it. I would argue that therefore the skills acquired by going through a PDP process, such as reflexivity, would support this change of emphasis. Trowler (1998: 73) states that the change of emphasis within the curriculum has been tracked by Tapper and Salter since 1978. It is not

something that is new however, it has become increasingly important. Such publications as the Leitch Report (2006) and countless newspaper articles annually criticise and contest the advantages gained by studying for a degree in HE. Agenda such as 'Employability' and 'Graduate attributes' are now overtaking the term 'PDP' within the institutional priorities but I would argue that the activities have a certain synergy. No matter what term is used within my University the hierarchical structure is similar with the priorities being authorised top down, coming to rest with ILE, who I would see as being the conduit for development and evaluation of what is then contextualised and delivered by the Academic Schools. Trowler (1998: 29) suggests this will affect how academics respond to change and will,

"... filter academics' perception of and reactions to policies, conditioning the ways in which they 'implemented' them".

In my project an example of this would be where disciplines with one view of mentoring were less open to try the concept of developmental mentoring as they had discipline-based traditions that coloured their view. However, Trowler (1998: 70) might see the community of practice relating to PDP as 'progressive'. The attitudes to student centred learning that I observed were similar in that,

"... students' freedom of choice and personal development take priority over propositional knowledge and experiential learning is valued at least as highly as other types".

This would also fit the profile of an institution that prides itself on widening participation.

Concepts relating to personal development have been given an emphasis since at least the 1970's, it is therefore of great concern to me to think that this activity is viewed by many academics, as at best, secondary to discipline content. Land (2004: 131) raises the notion of 'resistance to change' and questions what strategies can be used to overcome it.

5.4.3 Resistance to change

Throughout my research I have been very aware of the sensitivity of investigating a 'problem' link to the practice of members of staff who I want to motivate and work with me. I wanted the research to be supportive and helpful and not cause harm to those taking part, (Costley and Gibbs 2006). This is one of the reasons that the concept of developmental mentoring and a community of practice appealed to me for the emphasis on mutual growth rather than a 'them and us' situation and a concept of 'otherness' (Land 2004: 132). Land uses the work of Taylor (1999) in particular the concept of 'autopilots' that define 'habituated coping strategies' that staff may use in their discipline environment. If I look at what PDP processes may require of staff compared to that of other learning experiences then this may highlight some of the concerns that could create resistance.

- PDP requires students that write in a reflective way, this uses subjective, emotional language
- There is no right or wrong answer only an acceptable way of meeting the assessment criteria and learning outcomes.
- The personal nature of the student response requires staff to give individual feedback
- Within a PDP process this feedback should be formative

These examples translate to members of staff having to spend more time engaging with their students through this type of learning. Leaving the advantages of this engagement to one side for the moment, compared to some forms of traditional teaching and learning e.g. a lecture, then it can be argued that using PDP processes is more time consuming.

For example, I was part of a discipline team delivering a School-wide core level 1 module with 470 students enrolled. The module was aimed at developing the research and study skills of the students with the aim of giving them the orientation to the subject specific skills that they would need to successfully complete their other modules. Previously the module had been taught by lecture primarily given by a specialist study skills tutor, assessed by an essay and a summative portfolio of evidence submitted at the end of the module. The new module would use the ePortfolio system with the aim of having small formative pieces of assessment submitted throughout the teaching weeks. The new module

was taught in four iterations by subject and specialist study skills tutors working together. The rationale for the changes was to improve achievement, progression and ultimately retention.

Week 1 students download and personalise a scaffolded ePortfolio template provided by their tutors. Students were expected to personalise and submit their assessment ePortfolio in week 3

Week 5: 330 students had submitted their ePortfolios for formative feedback at this point. The 140 students who had not submitted were contacted by their tutor

Week 6: 110 students were identified potentially 'at risk' as after repeated reminders they still had not submitted any work. Staff were then able to make contact (personally to the student and also through their personal tutors) to enable the identification of support needs and any non-academic issues that might be affecting the student. Through this contact issues were highlighted such as IT facilities having been stopped through non payment of fees, non-attendance at the taught sessions, some misunderstanding of the instructions given.

The module was seen by some staff (and students) as onerous as it required a lot more time and effort however more students were retained and progressed than in previous deliveries. Staff needed to see a value and benefit between the amount of work that they put in and the student outcomes.

Working with an ILE colleague and members of the discipline team I jointly published the experiences and outcomes of this work. One publication was in a discipline specific forum (Cooper, P, Dyson, J, Lawton, M, and Marshall, L, 2009) and the other was in a learning and teaching journal (Lawton, M, and Purnell, E, 2010). The joint publication with the discipline team was particularly important to cement a collaborative approach and joint ownership of a problematic situation. I wanted to be seen as part of a team and as a member of the Academic School. This did happen and has continued. I have had a far greater involvement with curriculum design issues with this school than other developers have had. There has been much less resistance to me joining design teams, School-organised staff development days and other discipline-based events. I am also aware that as a developer I have been perceived as being in a privileged

situation by being able to build an external profile and reputation around implementation of PDP and ePortfolio based learning pedagogies. Though examples of discipline-based practice are used, it is still our names, as presenters, that are published in the conference literature.

Land (2004: 133) discusses Goulder's (1979) concepts of 'cosmopolitans' and 'locals' in relationship to academics. These concepts have resonance with my observations of how members of the ePortfolio community of practice see themselves and perceive how their colleagues have reacted to change. Land suggests that cosmopolitans are more entrepreneurial and have a greater external reputation outside of their organisation. He suggests that they would have a greater affinity to "fashionable novel practice and the raising of its profile". This would be true for the ePortfolio champions that I identified at the start of my project. They may well contest Land's view that this is a, "privileged role within the organisation", this would not be the view of ePortfolio champions. Rather than being privileged they would see themselves as being disadvantaged, that their innovation was not being recognised or respected by their colleagues and that they were being actively thwarted by the 'locals', those members of staff who "keep things running effectively". The ePortfolio champions would see the 'locals' as stifling change by not adopting the developing pedagogy, they would contest that PDP without using an ePortfolio system was inefficient and ineffective.

I was aware of this view of the resistance to change and some of the tensions expressed by discipline-based staff in the design stage of my project which is why I wanted to have more of a developmental rather than a protégé approach to mentoring. By using SSM I was also taking what Land (2004: 136) would define as a systemic stance. Important notions such as unintended consequences, unblocking and movement are part of this experience. My view of learning and teaching is that it is a continuous changing and flexible process that needs and has to respond to the ever changing social and political environments in which we are positioned. The flexibility of SSM is something that can allow change to be managed in a systemic way but still within a structured framework. By giving a voice to all participants resistance can be acknowledged and considered by questioning and comparing the real world to that of the conceptual. The two key questions of whether a change for improvement is culturally desirable and culturally feasible give a framework in which to explore the attitudes to the change that is suggested.

SSM values debate and discussion throughout its process therefore it is also worth looking at what Land (2004: 143) terms as a dialectical stance. He suggests that this stance is one favoured by those with an interpretive-hermeneutic orientation as it is characterised by *intelligent conversation* that tries to gain an understanding of other points of view. It is a process of constant readjustment and interpretation. Again SSM is not something that is linear, the SSM practitioner and participants have the ability to reinterpret findings as environments shift and change. What can be a concern is that there is little call for 'hard' evidence within this framework however it can deal with complex relationships. Within my project I was not trying to prove cause and effect, for example, 'by doing PDP you will improve student achievement, progression and retention', I was however trying to see how I could work more effectively with colleagues who could be faced with this kind of question. Reflecting back on the stated transformation that I had identified in the CATWOE (section 4.2.2: 117) then an approach that created a collegial environment is needed for change to happen. This also links to 'the third way' (Elkjaer, 2003) concept as for change to happen then both individuals and organisations need to learn.

5.5 A reflection on this chapter

One of the most important things I feel that I have uncovered within this chapter is how my own orientations to educational development have coloured my research approach and the conceptual model that I offered for trial within the Pathfinder Project. The development activities that I designed with others were influenced by approaches I felt at ease with such as discussion, debate, dialogue and reflection. My approaches to both the research methodology and the use of an ePortfolio system also reflect my ease with technology as a learning tool. Any resistance to change I do not see as a threat but as a challenge to which I can find a way of bringing 'others' around. I value the use of examples of practice and look for models that can be contextualised, transformed and used by different practitioners. I can be dismissive of anything that must be proven by hard evidence before action is taken. I am not risk adverse and enjoy innovation and creativity. Knowing more about how I have approached my research and how I offer and engage with educational development has meant that I recognise that my approach to change is one that is not shared by all. Where I see a challenge others may see a threat.

Chapter 6 Conclusions and recommendations

My project conclusions and recommendations have different messages for different audiences. These include the roles of 'client', 'practitioner' and 'owner(s) of the issue(s) addressed' (Checkland and Poulter 2006: 28) as identified in section 4.14 Analysis 1 (the intervention): 112. In addition, I am aiming my conclusions at:

1. Those working in a central educational development unit
2. Those thinking of using developmental mentoring for educational development of staff
3. Those engaged in practitioner research

In section 2.1 Research statement: 25, I identified key stakeholders within the University of Wolverhampton, these would be:

The Institute for Learning Enhancement (ILE)
Senior Managers
Discipline-based staff
Students

Externally within the HE sector I identified:

Other HEI's via The Centre for Recording Achievement

My research findings do not have direct messages for students. The Pathfinder Project evaluated the student experience and conclusions and recommendations relating to students are contained within that documentation. My doctoral project conclusions and recommendations relate to the three main questions in my research and the messages for the key stakeholders are contained within the discourse around these questions.

6.1 LUMAS revisited

Section 3.4.1.3. The LUMAS model: 72 introduced the concept which I have now revisited reflecting on my own research journey and what has developed from it (Figure 39: 193),

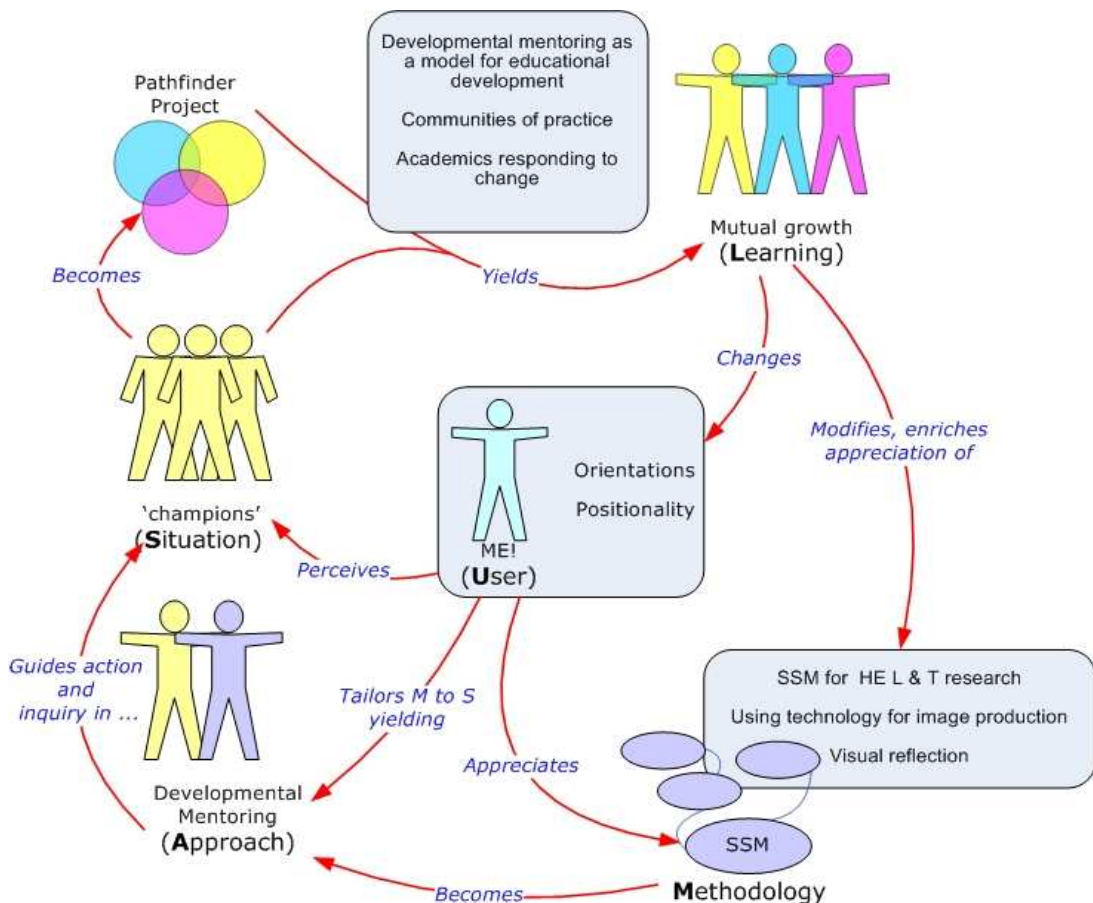


Figure 39 LUMAS revisited

I have added the findings of my project within the LUMAS model. Some relate to the methodology (M), some to the 'topic' of my project and some to my role as a practitioner/researcher (U). When trying to articulate the characteristics of my project I came up with in no particular order; partnership, capacity, participation, mutual benefit, growth, peer, collegial, dynamic, tri-partite, plural, positionality, mentoring, multifaceted and visual. The LUMAS model provides a mechanism which structures this complexity to reflect the learning journey that I have been on. In addition the model attempts to present the interaction and learning which occurred between discipline-based colleagues and myself. In my Preface: 10, I posed the following questions; as an educational

developer is it realistic to hope that by engaging with discipline-based staff in their own territory some practice will rub off and nurture that group? Will I gain in my educational development role, a layer of understanding of the discipline-based learning and teaching environment which I will lose if I stay away from that setting? A key outcome from my project is the acquisition of a greater understanding of just how important it is as an educational developer to work with discipline-based colleagues and really try to find out what they are grappling with within their learning and teaching contexts. I see this as vital for an interpretive-hermeneutic orientation. By engaging with discipline colleagues in their environment I can take back and integrate examples of practice that can be brokered and modelled within other contexts. As a reflective practitioner I endeavour to work with colleagues so that there is mutual benefit from any engagement.

The originality in my project lies in taking the concept of developmental mentoring and using its characteristics and phases to provide a new approach for educational development that is mutually beneficial to all. I acknowledge that my own orientations and stances as an educational developer have affected what I have designed and delivered and that I am not a neutral observer in this process. The use of SSM has enabled me to untangle and articulate the personal, professional and organisational learning within three clear research questions.

6.2 How can a central department develop an effective way of working with discipline-based teaching staff?

My conclusions for this question come in three parts and one observation. The first response is that a central department can broker and negotiate an accommodation resulting from the activities of a community of practice in order to affect institutional policy and practice. Within this role a central department can assist that 'community of practice' to become a 'community of inquirers' working for institutional change and learning thus stopping that community becoming just a "near miss" for organisational learning (Argyris and Schön 1996: 17). I suggest that this would go some way to making those in a community of practice feel that their work was recognised and valued. A horizontal community of practice can bring together people from different

disciplines, though in my experience, this can be quite difficult to achieve within a vertical Academic School structure. Having an externally funded project helped make this happen. However, a community brokered in this way is something contrived, rather than naturally occurring. Wenger (1998: 241) would class this as a community of practice, stating that such communities,

“... arise, evolve, and dissolve according to their own learning, though they may do so in response to institutional events”.

The particular institutional event in this report was the design and delivery of the Pathfinder Project. Within this definition is an acknowledgement of a community as an entity that changes over time and is responsive to need. At the start of my project, the naturally occurring community of ePortfolio practice developed its own 'knowledge' in the context of a discipline not based on curriculum content but on the pedagogy. Equity of practice across the institution was not a consideration or an issue for those discipline-based lecturers involved. However, as a central department we actively seek to provide consistency within the student experience of learning and teaching. Our institutional goals were different to those of individual members of the ePortfolio community of practice. In spite of this, as joint members of a community of inquirers we were all working towards enhancement in ePortfolio-based practice, some within a discipline-based context others for organisational learning. The message to senior managers is that institutional policy and learning would be more valued by discipline-based colleagues if informed by inquiry-based practice. A central department enabled to operate within vertical and hierarchal structures would facilitate this through brokering an accommodation for change.

The second response deduced from my project findings is that a central department can support a community of practice and help discipline-based colleagues respond to change by acting as 'brokers' to collect, record and share transferable practice outside of any specific discipline-based context. This could be separate to or within a tri-mentoring relationship. A central department can also support development and growth in a community of practice by providing a repository of the history of that practice that records what has taken place and recognises and encourages innovation.

Wenger (1998: 90) comments that,

“The simultaneous investment of practice in participation and reification can be a source of both continuity and discontinuity. In fact, since both participation and reification are inherently limited in scope, they inevitably create discontinuities in the evolution of practices. Participants move on to new positions, change direction, find new opportunities, become uninterested, start new lives”.

Likewise Argyris and Schön (1996: 18) comment that,

“There are instances in which organizational inquiry produce a temporary change in organization-theory-in-use, but the new understandings associated with that change, held only in the minds of certain individual ‘carriers’, are lost to the organization when they leave”.

This is what happened particularly with the mentors. By using a developmental mentoring approach to educational development there is a continuation of the ‘knowledge’, even though the mentors moved on, the ‘skills’ are now owned by the mentees, learning was not lost. The characteristics of developmental mentoring support the notion of building and sustaining communities of practice through mutual growth and social learning and recognise phases within a mutually beneficial relationship that ultimately wind up and move on. In addition, within developmental mentoring the mentee is steered towards personal insights from which they can then steer their own development, at an organisational level this concept can translate into an idea of contextualisation. A central department might hold evidence that steers others towards contextual insights for their own discipline-based development of practice.

The message here is for a central department to develop a way of building trust and networking with discipline-based colleagues so that the central department can broker a sharing of practice. In terms of an immediate outcome for my own institution this has been achieved for blended learning with the creation of a new post; Blended Learning Advisor. My project has influenced the role description of a new post; the Blended Learning Advisor. These advisors are expected to use the characteristics of developmental mentoring, such as helping discipline-based colleagues to do things for themselves and to develop their own wisdom and personal insights. This is actively pursued through social exchange and

questioning. BL Advisors are expected to work with discipline-based colleagues in their settings but also to share practice. The BL Advisors are not neutral observers but are positioned in the learning exchanges, their acquired experiential knowledge of discipline contexts then feedback into my central department.

The third response is that a central department can promote learning and teaching research as having relevance and value to discipline-based colleagues. I believe that by using SSM for my project I can demonstrate that it is an effective research methodology for learning and teaching that can deal with complex issues. What participants in the Pathfinder Project valued was the acknowledgement of their different worldviews; modelling in a systems world which is then taken back to colleagues for their real world comparisons; and finally implementing the notion of accommodation. All of these aspects include participants in the research as active partners. I see this as supporting a moving from a community of practice into becoming a community of inquiry (Dewey in Argyris and Schön 1996: 33) therefore,

“Inquiry becomes organizational when individuals inquiry on behalf of the organization, within a community of inquiry governed, formally or informally, by the roles and rules for the organisation.

A difficulty that cannot be solved at institutional level is how the HE sector views pedagogic research. An institution however, may internally generate interest and promote the relevance of such research on a par to that of discipline specific investigation.

Wenger (1998: 234) comments,

“That whenever a process, course or system is being designed, it is thus essential to involve the affected communities of practice”.

This is happening to some extent in relation to key performance indicators for retention, achievement and progression though research in this area is often focused on action and outcomes and is not in my experience often written up for publication.

There is a message here to both the internal research community and to the wider HE sector to recognise the value of pedagogic research. If 'education' is the sector-wide product then surely we should be investing in its research and development in order to be able to respond and plan for future markets.

My final observation is that it is a surprise to me that SSM is not more widely used in HE learning and teaching. I have observed and participated in the use of some SSM 'tools' for example the production of 'rich pictures' often as a workshop activity. These tend to be 'stand alone' events rather than something that forms part of a structured, full research methodology. I have never observed other SSM tools, for example CATWOE, or phases such as making purposeful activity models, used in a systematic way. SSM can deal with peaks and troughs in institutional change in a systematic way. Whenever I have been talking about my research with colleagues there has been considerable interest in the methodology. For most colleagues interested in learning and teaching SSM is something new and unheard of. I believe that the use of SSM in learning and teaching research would enable a central department to conduct collaborative research with discipline-based colleagues. On collaboration in action research, Argyris and Schön comment (1996: 44) that,

"First, a researcher who is interested in organizational learning ought to have an interest in the studying how practitioners' inquiry contributes to that process, Secondly, an organizational researcher who wants to produce results useful to practitioner-inquirers should want to meet their understanding with his own. He needs to listen to them and get inside their ways of thinking and acting, with respect to both strengths and limits, in order to increase his chances of being listened to and of making his research relevant in their eyes".

I believe that SSM would accomplish these aims. A tangible outcome from this project is that I am using SSM and in particular the visual elements and concept modelling in my day-to-day work. This is introducing the methodology to colleagues who have little if any experience of this approach. A personal outcome of my project that has impact on my work-based environment is my growing confidence as a researcher. I now feel able to introduce new approaches to colleagues in particular visual imagery to articulate and clarify my perceptions. I have been encouraged by how many colleagues have said that they appreciate the use of visual representations.

6.3 Is there a model for staff development that helps build staff capability and capacity?

My research findings show that generally developmental mentoring is a desirable model for educational development. Not all models of mentoring promote mutual growth, which is what I was hoping to achieve. The mentoring model I used was not within a formalised mentoring scheme, but was more of an ethos or a way of working that respected the characteristics of developmental mentoring. There is a conflict between running a formal mentoring scheme and identifying the resources to run it effectively. A formalised mentoring scheme might be highly desirable, though given the tight financial controls that the HE sector is under now, this is unlikely to be feasible at present at least in my own context and for the purpose of my project. The tri-partite model of mentoring offers something that is more feasible in my context. This assumption is supported by findings from Cureton, Green and Meakin (2010).

The use of the five phases in the developmental mentoring process was particularly successful as it gave people a framework through which they could see a clear progression. Each of the three retreats had a different emphasis that, from day one, set different expectations of all participants. This improved both the planning of the retreats and made all participants aware that their relationships were going through a process that would ultimately conclude and move on in a different direction. This was important in order to develop ownership and contextualisation of knowledge.

Using the Pathfinder Project to compare the conceptual model of developmental mentoring within a real world trial raised a number of issues related to the hierarchical structure of my institution. For example, to recruit members for the project my central department approached Academic School senior management, asking them to identify both a mentor and two mentees. This makes a number of assumptions, firstly, that senior management know of the appropriate personnel. Secondly, that there are those with the skills, capacity and inclination to take part, thirdly that there exists appropriate knowledge and practice within the disciplines and finally that what is suggested is a School priority or at the very least something that fits into any existing discipline-based strategies. In fact the lack of suitable experienced staff meant that the role of 'mentor' could not exist in all Schools. We could have used mentors that were

not discipline-based but there was an issue relating to the feasibility of this given that different academic disciplines have separate resource bases. There is little concern about people helping others in their own disciplines but resourcing support outside of the discipline can be an issue unless a 'cost' or reciprocal agreement is in place.

To conclude, for senior managers, developmental mentoring is desirable but the feasibility of using a formalised mentoring scheme needs careful resource consideration. Tri-partite mentoring can offer a model of working that can help build capability and therefore increase capacity. For staff based in a central department working with discipline-based colleagues wanting to develop capabilities then the characteristics of developmental mentoring are highly desirable. In particular, the notion of mentees developing and owning the knowledge gained that is meaningful to their own context.

6.4 How can this inform my work?

The originality of my thesis lies in the importance of replacing the notion of reflective practice with that of reflexivity. Giddens (1991), suggests that the advantage of a shift from reflective to reflexivity is that the latter pays particular attention to positionality, that is it problematises the developer's own experience, values, orientations, research stance and so forth; this allows for the developer to work in a self-critical way with academics. Schwandt (2007: 260) offers a definition that I see as particularly relevant to my situation,

“Reflexivity in a methodological sense can also signal more than inspection of potential sources of bias and their control. It can point to the fact that the inquirer is part of the setting, context and social phenomenon he or she seeks to understand”.

I believe that this definition describes the role as a practitioner/researcher and reflects the position of the researcher within SSM. Argyris and Schön (1996: 31) suggest that,

“The Deweyan inquirer is not a spectator but an actor who stands within a situation of action, seeking actively to understand and change it”.

At the start of my project, I did not examine my own work identity other than from the title of my role. As I became reflexive I realised that I was carrying out this investigation from the stance of an educational developer. This was not an identity that I had taken on at the beginning, I had not appreciated how my stance would colour and influence my work. As Land comments (2004: 1),

“Educational development remains a little understood activity, even within the higher education institutions in which it is located”.

I positioned myself not as a ‘staff developer’ someone who perhaps deals with skills and competencies (Laurillard 1993: 244) but as someone who looks at development as a mutual activity that enhances the knowledge of all involved. Webb (1996) for instance, comments that developers work with a binary of developer and developpee in which the former assigns the power to ‘change’ the latter. The remedy is not to stand back from the learning activity as a neutral facilitator (as Cowen advises) but to step into the activity, acknowledging where one is coming from and the social and relational character of what is going on. I gave myself the role of ‘broker’ in both the Pathfinder Project and my project (Wenger 1998: 255).

Land (2004) usefully points to developer *postures*, these are not self-consciously assumed; indeed Land's metaphoric stances are his terms and not those of the developers. In my view, it is important to shift the definition from the researcher to the developers themselves. Such a defining act would be part of their reflexivity. I have used Land's orientations to define where I would position myself and what stances I recognise I take on educational development. Prior to my project, I was not consciously aware of these. However, by now acknowledging my own orientations I have realised that the educational development activities and opportunities that I plan and deliver are from within those orientations. For example, I actively gather and share models of practice that I have observed or been engaged with.

The research methodology I chose, the data collection and the data analysis all allowed me to position myself within the research not as a lone character but working with others. My visual preferences and abilities made me question and develop the methodology, adapting it from within to suit my visual needs. In doing so, I re-awakened dormant skills in visual reflection that I had previously

used as an art and design student. I feel that I have been able to modify and enrich my use of SSM by presenting images that give participants access to my perceptions of given situations in a way that is engaging and that offer through visual metaphors a depth of meaning that could not be conveyed by just using simple line drawings. My use of visual reflexivity has positioned myself not only as an element within an image but also as the creator of that image. I have shaped my viewers' perceptions of my images by selecting metaphors for, example using chess pieces to represent senior management.

6.5 Has this project made a difference?

At the start of my project I identified my frustrations and the complex events and reasons that led me to undertake this project (Figure 4: 22). A key question for me has always been 'what would make a difference?' as see this as a fundamental difference between a traditional PhD and a DProf. When I wrote this earlier section I was primarily thinking in terms of institutional change, however as my work has progressed I have come to recognise that there are different layers to 'making a difference'.

On a personal level this project has made an enormous difference to me. I have developed from an academic with dyslexia who was very shy of her writing skills to someone who now feels empowered as a practitioner/researcher. I still struggle with some of the lexicon related to research but I am now far more confident engaging with research literature and the research process. I feel that I do have a legitimate research 'voice' and that I can write effectively, (though sometimes with some interesting grammar and creative typos). If asked if I am a researcher, I will now reply that I am, and know that I can evidence this claim. I feel that the use of SSM gave me ownership of my research project and helped me develop and gain my new identity.

As a practitioner/researcher I know that I have a different attitude to researching with colleagues and my place within this process. This project has changed my perceptions of my work situation and my place within it. I attribute this primarily to the notion of intelligent conversations. The use of SSM gave me a framework for discussions and debates with colleagues that focused and encouraged the accommodation of different worldviews. Through my project I explored my own orientations and stances to educational development. Though I

would not seek to change these, as the developer, I acknowledge that I need to appreciate how my orientations and stances may affect others.

In relation to my immediate work environment in ILE my project has directly impacted on two areas. Firstly there has been a further use of my interpretation of the phases and characteristics of developmental mentoring and the use of an ePortfolio system in a JISC externally funded project investigating 'An e-Portfolio based Pedagogy for SMEs (ePPSME)' www.wlv.ac.uk/eppsme. This project used the elements of three retreats following the developmental mentoring phases and ePortfolio pedagogy as core elements in its design. This project is also very visual in terms of its reporting and I have been able to share my experiences with the project team. The second impact has been in the design of a new staff position within ILE – Blended Learning Advisors. The characteristics of developmental mentoring were written into this role, such as,

- The mentor helps the mentee do things for themselves
- The mentor helps the mentee develop their own wisdom
- The mentor helps the mentee towards personal insights from which they can steer their own development

This has changed the role from being seen as technical production of learning and teaching artefacts to one that is developmental. Blended Learning Advisors work with discipline-based colleagues in their environment, feeding back their experiences into ILE. This carries forward the notion of mutual benefit and growth.

In terms of working with discipline-based colleagues I believe my project has made a difference to how ILE is perceived by some colleagues. For example, I have worked closely with some discipline-based colleagues enabling them to validate a new course. Below is an extract from an email sent to all staff in the school,

“I would like commend the other members of the proposing team (N, J, D and Megan Lawton (ILE)) who worked on this and commend them for the excellent work they did in supporting me get these initiatives approved”

Since this email I have been seen as a colleague by this school and have now been asked to help in other curriculum related issues. I now have greater

awareness of the learning and teaching issues for this academic school. It has strengthened my view that we as educational developers need to work with colleagues in their environment and within an approach that promotes mutual benefit.

It is harder to pin-point any direct institutional change that my project has made as the sector-wide changes that are happening due to funding issue mean that HE sector, let alone my institution, are in a state of flux.

6.6 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Senior managers should recognise and enable 'communities of practice' to become 'communities of inquiry' working on behalf of the institution to inform institutional policy and practice.

Recommendation 2: The institution should enable central educational developers to take on the role of brokering to assist communities of inquirers to gather, record and share activities for the benefit of the organisation, and discipline-based practice.

Recommendation 3: Organisations should value pedagogic research on a par with discipline-based research to be able to respond to future educational markets.

Recommendation 4: Researchers considering exploring pedagogic practice should consider SSM as an appropriate research methodology.

Recommendation 5: Developmental mentoring is a desirable model for educational development but the framework used and resourcing issues need consideration prior to the commencement of any activity.

Recommendation 6: Consideration needs to be given to the positionality of the researcher within their research setting and how this might influence the research.

Recommendation 7: Educational developers need to recognise their own orientations and stances as this will affect how they engage in development activities.

6.7 A final reflection

This project has been immensely enjoyable, something I might not have envisaged saying at the start of this work. I believe this has been in part due to the use of SSM. As I started to get to grips with the various phases and started to use some of the tools that SSM has to offer I felt that I had ownership of my research process. I have been able to enhance SSM to suit my own visual needs but have still kept to its core values and ethos. As Checkland and Poulter (2006: 196) state,

“Proper use of SSM always entails getting a ‘feel’ for a situation”.

As a practitioner/researcher this has been one of my goals, to get a feel of my work situation and my place within it. I believe that SSM has meant that discussions and debates with colleagues have been more focused and coherent with a deeper understanding of different worldviews and that this has helped me understand my colleagues and my place within my research, my institution and profession. This also helped me to explore my own orientations and stances to educational development, something that I had not reflected on previously. Nor was some thing that I had perceived as being important. I came to realise my own positionality made me the practitioner/researcher that I have become and how this has affected my approach to my work.

Using SSM has not just been concerned with finding out about a given situation but has led to defining action for improvement. For me, this has been in relation to my orientations as an educational developer and how these impact on the way I work with colleagues. As my research journey reaches a temporary pause, I know that I have become a more confident researcher as I have found a way of working that suits me and has helped me produce a piece of work that has influenced my work environment and of which I am proud. I believe that SSM has accommodated my interpretive paradigm, my positionality, the duality of being a practitioner/researcher and reflexivity. I will use SSM again and will strive to show others how useful this can be particularly for learning and teaching problematic situations.

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Appendix 1 PDP activities

Used as part of: "What do we mean by PDP? ePortfolio? and ePDP?" Pathfinder Project briefing paper 4, (2008).

Activity list and activity groups shown:

1. Compiling list of experiences or past activities, including employment
2. Reviewing and reflecting on logs
3. Reviewing past written goals and action plans against more recent past experience
4. Reviewing experience in response to guidance
5. Reviewing coursework performance and course experience
6. Reviewing critical incidents
7. Listing achievements / qualifications (with documentation if available)
8. Relating experiences to skills (or vice versa)
9. Reviewing / profiling / auditing skills
10. Reviewing progress in / development of skills
11. Reviewing personal interests
12. Reviewing / reflecting on personal attitudes / values
13. Assembling evidence for skills
14. Assessing own learning style
15. Setting goals for skills development
16. Setting goals related to subject development
17. Setting more general personal / social goals
18. Relating goals to motivations and reasons
19. Originating CV / personal statement / other compilation
20. Revising CV / personal statement / other compilation
21. Originating action plan for the achievement of academic goals
22. Revising action plan for academic goals in the context of feedback / discussion
23. Originating action plan for personal / skills development / goals
24. Revising action plan for personal goals in the context of feedback / discussion
25. Doing exercises alone for skill development
26. Participating in workshops / classes / sessions for skill development

27. Choosing / evaluating suitability of course / module / employment / position
28. Writing application for position / employment / course / programme
29. Writing log (for learning or reflection)
30. Writing individual learning plan
31. Negotiating learning / employment contract

Activity groupings (Ward 2007):

- A. Recording experiences (activities 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9,30)
- B. Concerning skills (activities 9,10,11,14,26,27)
- C. Concerning values, attitudes, motivations, reasons (activities 12,13,18,19,28)
- D. Goal-setting (activities 16,17,18)
- E. Planning (activities 22,23,24,25,2, 32,33)
- F. Summarising (for presentation) (activities 20,21,29)
- G. Understanding one's learning (activity 15)

Achieving our goals: PDP as a process - definitions. Ward *et al* (2007):

- Process 1. thinking ahead and planning, using both critical rational thinking and imagination;
- Process 2. doing something and being more aware of what is being done;
- Process 3. recording these observations and perceptions;
- Process 4. reviewing /reflecting on actions and their effects;
- Process 5. evaluating and making judgements about self and the effects of own actions;
- Process 6. engaging in conversation with a teacher/tutor and/or peers in order to discuss/challenge experiences, perceptions and judgements;
- Process 7. using this personal knowledge as a resource to inform future actions.

Appendix 2 Pathfinder Project retreat 1

11th & 12th September 2007

Main aim: On day 1 of this retreat the aim is to bring together the eLearning mentors with the project organisational team, to launch the project and establish project objectives and outcomes, to build a rapport within the team and set direction for the next phase

Key themes and objectives: Building rapport and setting direction

Participants: Members of the project from CELT, 10 school mentors and 20 level 1 tutors (tutors). CELT to lead

DAY 1

Participants:	Overview	Activity
ILE and 10 school mentors., ILE lead		
9.30	Introduction and scene setting to the project. Establishment of project timetable and activities. Presentation with discussion. All participants should be able to understand the rationale for the project, be clear on the project activities and deadlines	Activity 1: Identifying PebblePad© skills base and previous use of PDP activities.
10.30	Break	
10.45	Overview of the eLearning Mentor role. Presentation with discussion. All to have a clear view of what they are being asked to do	

11.00	Group activity with peer feedback	Activity 2: Conduct a risk analysis of your own school based situation. All to have thought about the associated risks of mentoring in their own school context
12.00	Feedback to the whole group on risk factors and potential solutions	
13.00	Lunch	
14.00	Introduction to the school and collaborative project web folios, research methodology and ethical considerations.	Activity 3. Hands on workshop on PebblePad©. All to be able to access and use the web folios for the project
15.30	Break	
16.00	Webfolio personalisation	Activity 4. Personalising web folios. Submission to gateways
17.00	Outline of Project evaluation requirements	
17.30	Round up of day 1 feedback to take into day 2	
19.00	Evening meal	

DAY 2.

Main aim: Day 2 aims to bring together the eLearning mentors with their mentees, to launch the project and establish project objectives and outcomes for mentees, to build a rapport within the team and set direction for the next phase

Key themes and objectives: Building rapport and setting direction

Mentors Lead	Overview	Activity
9.00	Mentors Review any issues raised in day 1. Discussion to make sure that any major issues raised in day 1 are dealt with	
9.30	Mentor Asking the right questions.	Activity 5. To work through scenarios loosely based on current experiences of how you might mentor someone through various situations.
10.30	Break for mentors	
10.30	Mentees Mentees introduction. Establishment of project timetable and activities. All able mentee should be able to understand the rationale for the project. Be clear on the project activities and deadlines	
10.45	Establishing the mentoring relationship. All to have a clear view of what they are being asked to do:	Activity 6. Mentors and mentees to meet to discuss 1. What do you want to do? 2. Why do you want to do it? 3. How do you want to do it? 4. How can I help you? Mentees to work with mentors to see how the mentors can help them
12.30	Break	
13.30	Action planning. What have been the issues raised?	Activity 7. Create a collaborative action plan for each mentee
15.00	Linking action plans	Activity 8. Link the action plans to school webfolio template
15.30	Evaluation requirements	
16.00	Recap and review	
16.30	Retreat finish	

Appendix 3 Pathfinder Project retreat 2

7th 8th January 2008

Main aim: To report on progression of the work on level 1 modules and to report on the mentoring relationship

Key themes and objectives: Progression and sharing of practice

Participants: Members of the project from CELT, 10 school mentors and 20 level 1 tutors (tutors). Tutors to lead supported by Mentors

DAY 1

Time	Overview
9.30	Introduction to retreat 2. Group activity: Project overview, linking web folios
	Each school is given a 30 minute slot during which each module tutor to report back on their experiences of ePDP within their module. 10 minutes per module tutor and 10 minutes for questions per school. (If your module is running in Semester 2, please use your 10 minutes to tell us what e-PDP activities you are planning for your students)
10.30	School of Art and Design (SAD)
11.00	Break
11.15	School of Applied Sciences (SAS)
11.45	School of Computing (SCIT)
12.15	School of Engineering and Built Environment (SEBE)
12.45	General feedback
13.00	Lunch
14.00	ePortfolio research (Cohort III, IV, NTFS and research cluster)
14.30	Writing for academic publication (Workshop: External consultant)
15.15	Break
15.30	Continued workshop

16.15	Feedback and review of day 1
17.00	Close

DAY 2.

Main aim: To report on progression of the work on level 1 modules and to report on the mentoring relationship

Time	Overview
9.00	Review any issues raised in day 1.
9.15	School of Education (SEd)
9.45	School of humanities, languages, social sciences (HLSS)
10.15	School of Health (SoH)
10.45	School of Legal Studies (SLS)
11.15	Break
11.30	School of Sport and Performing arts and Leisure (SSPAL)
12.00	The University of Wolverhampton business School (UWBS)
12.30	Feedback
13.00	Lunch
14.00	What next? Reviewing the risk analysis exercise
15.00	Break
15.15	Working on individual school project web folios
16.00	Feedback and review of retreat
16.30	Retreat close

Appendix 4 Pathfinder Project retreat 3

1st and 2nd April 2008

Main aim: To discuss the key messages from the project and to suggest initial recommendations to key stakeholders.

Key themes and objectives: Winding up and moving on

Participants: Members of the project from ILE, 10 school mentors and 20 level 1 tutors. (Resource managers to join us on day 2)

Time	Overview
9-9.30	Arrival and coffee
9.30	Start. What has been achieved? Brief overview from the project team
9.45	Activity - What are the three most important things that you will take away from this project? Individuals then as schools.
10.30	Blended Learning Strategy - how can you plan to continue to use ePortfolio - this should be linked to the objective in the BLS relating to students using ePDP
11.00	Coffee
11.15	Case study write up (school teams working together)
13.00	Lunch
14.00	Technical Issues and enhancement feature requests - Surgery with Shane Sutherland from Pebble Learning
15.15	Coffee
15.30	Five minutes per school to show student examples from the project and to sum up in 3 words your experience as the Pathfinder Project team within your school (an extra 5-10mins per school for Semester 2 projects to report back on the experience of ePortfolio in their modules)
17.00	Close
19.30	Dinner

DAY 2.

Time	Overview
9.30	What do your managers need to know? Is mentoring desirable? What helps and what hinders? What would make mentoring feasible?
11.00	Coffee
11.15	How can you carry on doing the work you did this year? What do you need? School plans devised by participants for sustainable use of ePortfolio across levels. This document will be used as the basis of discussion with resource managers
13.00	Lunch
14.00	Invited managers to join school groups to discuss future plans
15.00	Coffee
15.15	What next? Summary by project team
16.00	Retreat close

Appendix 5 Personal Development Planning Quality Standards

Opportunities and entitlements

The minimum expectations for institutional PDP policies are that:

- at the start of a programme, students will be introduced to the opportunities for PDP;
- students will be provided with opportunities for PDP at each stage of their programme.
- the rationale for PDP at different stages of a programme will be explained for the benefit of students (e.g. in student or course handbooks or module/unit guides);
- the nature and scope of opportunities for PDP, and the recording and support strategies will be determined by each institution.

These minimum criteria are not intended to constrain existing practice or local initiatives and institutional or local policies are likely to exceed these minimum expectations.

Minimum outcomes

On completion of their programme students will have:

- participated in PDP in a range of learning contexts at each stage or level of their programme;
- demonstrated that they can access and use the aids and tools provided by the institution to help them reflect upon their own learning and achievements and to plan for their own personal, educational and career development;
- with support, created their own learning records containing information on the qualities and skills they can evidence which can be drawn upon when applying for a job or further study.

Information on PDP

- the opportunities for PDP in student programmes will be made clear in the programme specification and through any other means the institution considers appropriate;
- students who are applying to study in HE will be informed about the institution's policies on PDP;
- at the start of their programme students will be provided with information on PDP in their programme including a rationale for the approaches used;
- students will be provided with information on how they might integrate extra-curricula experiences (for example: voluntary service, part-time employment or work placements, study abroad, fieldwork and working as a student representative or Student Union officer) into their own personal development planning process;
- students will be provided with information on any ways in which their own evidence of learning might be eligible for accreditation;
- formal opportunities for PDP in the HE curriculum will be identified in the HE Transcript.

Quality Assurance

- Institutions will be expected to have mechanisms to assure themselves that PDP is being implemented effectively.

Appendix 6 ePDP external projects between 2006 -2010

1. Cohort III of the Inter/National Coalition for ePortfolio Research I/NCEPR. This consists of 10 American universities Sheffield Hallam and ourselves. Our research question is: *What can be learnt from the experiences of ePortfolio early adopter schools as a way to build capacity and build frameworks for scalability across the institution and its partners?* (2005-08)
2. Cohort IV of the Inter/National Coalition for ePortfolio Research I/NCEPR. This consists of seven English, 1 Scottish, 1 Dutch and 1 American Universities. The University of Wolverhampton is the only UK University in two coalitions. Our research question is: "What are the facilitating and inhibiting factors in building capability and capacity of staff in supporting the use of ePortfolio?" (2007-2010)
3. HEA National Teaching Fellowship Scheme project to establish a National Action Research Network on Researching and Evaluating Personal Development Planning and e-Portfolio. (NTFS NARN project). A coalition of 16 universities (2007-2010)
4. Pathfinder Project to embed the use of ePDP activities into the Level 1 curriculum of two modules from each of the 10 academic schools. This project included 31 level 1 lecturers and 1810 Level 1 students. Modules ranged from groups of 15 to the largest module with 350 registered students. (2007- 2008)
5. HEFCE project headed by the Centre for Recording Achievement - Developing sectoral policy in e-portfolio practice to support employer engagement and workforce development. Partners included 11 universities (including Wolverhampton, Institute of Physics, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance and the Centre for Recording Achievement (2008-2010)
6. TechDIS HEAT (HEAT: Higher Education Assistive Technologies Scheme) Wolverhampton has two projects out of 34 awarded to the HE sector. 1. Multimedia to support mentoring scheme (Deaf 2 Deaf mentoring scheme) and

2. Mobile devices on field visits to places of worship. Both of these projects use PebblePad© (2008/09)

7. JISC Effective Practice with ePortfolio Guide. The guide, *Effective Practice with e-Portfolios*, describes current good practice in the use of e-portfolios, largely comprising of work from the University, as a support to learning and as an aid to progression to the next stage of education or to employment.

8. Consultancy to JISC for the 'ePortfolio infokit'. The 'infokit' covers the main drivers, purposes, processes, perspectives and issues around e-portfolios, as well as showcasing the wide range of project activity undertaken by JISC and others over the last few years, and signposting projects and research currently underway.

9. Consultancy and workshops for the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) on using ePortfolios including: ePortfolio for assessment, employer engagement, work-based learning, post graduate study, non text based reflection, implementation, policy and practice for PDP and ePortfolio

10. Requests from other UK Universities for advice and guidance including the following: Coventry, Gloucester, Bedfordshire, Northumbria, Manchester Metropolitan, Reading, Worcester, Aston, Surrey, Exeter, Canterbury Christ Church, Leeds, Teesside, Bournemouth, Plymouth, Chester, Greenwich, Bolton

11. Requests from international agencies University of Michigan, Griffiths University and Charles Sturt, University of Melbourne Australia, University of Madeira, International Coalition for ePortfolio Research (20 US, 3 Canadian, 1 Dutch + UK universities)

12. ePortfolio Pedagogy for Small Medium Enterprises (ePPSME) HEFCE Project consultant developing sectoral policy in e-portfolio practice to support employer engagement and workforce development. (2009 -2010)

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