

ESCalate news

The newsletter of the Education Subject Centre - advancing learning and teaching in education

Our first Ten Years - a special edition

Supporting Learning and Teaching for

10 Years

Subject Centre for Education ESCalate

I received the invitation to write this piece with great pleasure. I have been, from the outside, a witness to the excellent work undertaken by and facilitated through ESCalate for much of the last ten years. As a former Subject Centre Director, I felt there was much my subject centre could learn from how ESCalate operates. Over the last four years, in my oversight role of all the Academy Subject Centres, I have been impressed by the breadth, or what Tony refers to in this publication as an “eclectic approach”, as well as the high quality and perceived value of its work. This publication bears witness to this.

I am aware that the pressures on ESCalate are in a certain sense, unique, in that it, above any other subject centre, is expected to have a view on many aspects of initial or continuing professional development in higher education, whether it be HE in FE or as now, Open Educational Resources

(OER). This is in addition to the natural communities that ESCalate supports e.g. undergraduate education studies, masters and PhD programmes, ITE, teacher educators, lifelong learning, continuing education etc. Whilst this uniqueness places ESCalate at the centre of current debates in HE, it is also a heavy and expanding workload to address, which they continue to do magnificently.

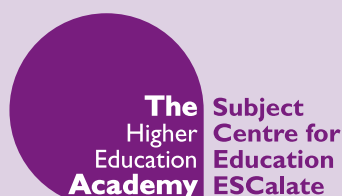
I have been struck by the many examples of how ESCalate has provided support and seed-corn funding, or brought out the full benefits of other investments in teaching and learning through its brokerage and networks. There is ample evidence of activity and impact in the pages that follow.

My concern here is to try to conceptualise what ESCalate is, both in itself and as an exemplar of a subject centre. As we all know, the public sector is facing a funding squeeze and the



Academy is not immune from this. In our deliberation of how we must react to this context, we should develop an understanding of the ways in which change occurs in HE; the affective link academics feel to their subject communities; the means by which knowledge is created within these communities, as well as disseminated beyond them and how, through the

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ESCalate news

ESCalate @ Bristol

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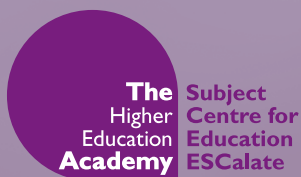
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If you have any ideas or copy that you would like to see included in a future newsletter please get in touch.

We are especially interested in items which:

- Show innovative practice in your Education Department;
- Celebrate National Teaching Fellows and other awards for teaching and learning;
- Showcase student achievement.

The next copy deadline is 11th October 2010,
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subject lens, subject centres have worked to ensure a central overarching mission for the Academy to raise the status of teaching and learning.

One of the writers here has adopted the concept from Wenger (1998) of ESCalate as a "Community of Practice". This is a term that is perhaps over-used and not always defined. But can it illuminate what role ESCalate serves? Certainly, there are examples of the bonding that communities require and this is best summed up by Roger Murphy's piece which notes ESCalate as a "collective endeavour" within an otherwise competitive HE culture. There are many examples of how ESCalate has helped individuals develop their sense of identity and draw on the support and expertise of others, again a key idea in the community of practice concept. There is also the key role that ESCalate plays in funding or otherwise supporting the production of resources and other artefacts that is the "practice" of this community, and these are in the specialised areas (employability, student engagement, teacher educators etc) that many of the writers in this publication refer to. Whilst ESCalate may feel it is stretched thinly, it is actually facilitating specialised work, or "domains" in Wenger's terminology, through the networks of individuals that associate with it. Again and again, I was struck by the experiential learning that is evidenced in these short pieces and by the ways in which informal and tacit knowledge is more easily shared in these communities that share the passion for improving the student

learning experience. It seems an exercise of merit to think of ESCalate as a "community of practice" or perhaps an umbrella community that supports others.

Much is made of the challenging times we collectively face. Yet there are opportunities too. The student experience is now on the political agenda with a force. The possible lifting of student fees in England will increase the sharpness of this focus still further. Yet institutions will also face funding pressures. The work of the Academy, especially through its discipline focus, should be part of the solution for institutions as they face this twin challenge.

I close with my personal thanks to all the ESCalate staff, past and present, that I have had the pleasure of working with. I should mention a number in particular. Firstly, Julie Anderson, who as a practical example of the relevance of ESCalate's work across the broader field of professional development, worked closely with me over a key time in supporting all the subject centres. I found her approach symptomatic of ESCalate – warm, friendly, professional, committed but above all knowing how to have fun. Secondly, my thanks go to Tony Brown who has steered ESCalate so ably and also played a major role across the whole Academy. He also embodies all the virtues I noted about Julie and I wish him all the very best for the future. Lastly to all who have worked with or for ESCalate over the first ten years – what a success!

References

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David Sadler
Director (Networks)
Higher Education
Academy

David Sadler took up the post of Director (Networks) at the end of August 2006. He is responsible for the Academy's work with subject and discipline networks (including the Subject Centres) and individuals.

Previously, David was the Director of the Higher Education Academy Subject Network for Sociology, Anthropology, Politics (C-SAP). David took up the post of Director of C-SAP in September 2005, having previously been Chair of C-SAP's Advisory Committee. He was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship in 2005 and was previously a Jean Monnet Course Award holder.

Prior to joining the Academy David was Dean of Social Sciences at the University of Northampton and his academic area of research and teaching was international security. David was previously Head of Historical and International Studies at De Montfort University (1991-2004).

The articles in this section are from a range of people who have been part of the ESCalate team at some point in the last ten years.

Roger Murphy

was ESCalate's first Director and has always kept a keen eye on developments both within the Subject Centre and in the wider Education community. ►

In the beginning...



Ten years on I can still vividly remember the heady days when a small group of us from the Universities of Nottingham, Bristol, and Oxford Brookes put together the proposals which led to the start of ESCalate. I am extremely pleased that this initiative has been sustained and that ESCalate has grown and developed in the way that it has.

There are three main things that stand out for me as the most important qualities of the work of a Subject Centre:

- It is essentially a collaborative endeavour involving all of us involved in the academic discipline of education within higher education. Within a culture of competition and league tables, genuine collaboration of this type is hugely important.
- The work is essentially focussed on improving the learning experiences of our students. That too is so vitally important in an age when research priorities and diminishing resources can together have a potentially damaging effect.

- It recognises that those of us working in universities have much to learn. Clearly we all need support to allow us to continue to develop as effective reflective practitioners in relation to our own work as university educators.

Nevertheless I still don't think that enough is being invested in university-based staff development and as we celebrate this ten year milestone, we are I am sure all aware of the cuts that will threaten the continuation of the full breadth of the work of the HEA Subject Centres. Teaching students effectively still isn't acknowledged as a major challenge in much of the higher education sector. Most academics, for understandable reasons, are more focussed on their discipline-based research priorities. It is great that some also manage to be creative and innovative, as they try to respond to the challenges in a digital age when new millennium learners enrol for their courses and arrive at university expecting learning to be engaging, culturally relevant, and modern in its use of new technologies and

information sharing approaches. The HEA Subject Centre and CETL initiatives have made a significant impact in terms of raising the profile of effective innovations in teaching and learning in higher education. There is however much, much more that needs to be done, and I hope very much that ESCalate and many other similar centres can be resourced effectively to carry on this vital work.



Roger Murphy
University of Nottingham

Roger Murphy is Professor of Education at the University of Nottingham, where he has been both Head of School and a Faculty Dean. He was Director of ESCalate for its first three years. He has also been President of the British Educational Research Association and Director of the Visual Learning Lab Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and several research centres. He is a specialist in the area of educational assessment and evaluation.

Arlene Gilpin the first ESCalate manager, talks about a role she describes as encompassing 'associate directorship with executive manager, academic manager and any other job that needed doing!' ▶

Memories of the early years of ESCalate...

Escalate was founded by the Universities of Bristol, Nottingham and Oxford Brookes. Professor Patricia Broadfoot, then Head of the Graduate School of Education at Bristol, was the initiator of the process of obtaining the funding to set up the Centre. The Education Faculty at Nottingham University was already a respected partner with Bristol's Graduate School of Education in research and other activities related to teaching and learning in HE. Oxford Brookes already had a reputation for undergraduate teaching and learning, and within the new Education Faculty there was a rich store of expertise to draw on.

As with all projects that start from scratch, the Learning and Teaching Subject Network (LTSN) was a fascinating mixture of structures and (mis?) understandings. I would hesitate to say that many centres muddled through, although some certainly did, but there were many interpretations of process and structure in the early 2000s, partly occasioned by the great variety of subject structures and their needs.

Although from a wider European perspective it cannot be denied that the whole 'Bolognarization' of HE was a strong impetus for the setting up of the LTSN, one should not forget that the Subject Centres were born between the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) reviews of teaching and learning and the Research Selectivity Exercise (now the RAE). While the QAA reviews were in force, one could visibly discern across all subjects in universities, a willingness among all staff to at least talk the talk of quality teaching and learning. The opposite tension of the RAE could mean that colleagues were much more engaged with completing and writing up research projects, or bids for funding, and the quality of teaching was taken for granted. This is not to say that it was irrelevant, just that it was part of professional practice that one could 'do' and the hard part was getting the publications ready for the RAE. In most cases the European implications were not seen to be highly relevant to the rank and file at that time.

Some reminiscences...

- Management meetings between Roger Murphy (University of Nottingham), Sonia Blandford (Oxford Brookes University) and me took place at monthly intervals, planning what we were to do, and reviewing what had been done. Picture the scene: eight in the morning; a hum of busy discussion all round; groups of similarly engaged people with laptops and papers in front of them and coffee cups jostling for room on the narrow tables; outside the drone of the motorway. We were in a Little Chef cafe more or less equidistant from all three institutions. Work done by eleven or so, we could all be back at base by lunchtime.
- Workshops for the wider group took place twice a year, usually at a conference centre, but sometimes at one of the three universities. An overnighter, with lots of activities related to how strategy could be translated into practical work plans with names attached. Great fun and very exhilarating.



■ Visits to institutions are some of the most interesting memories. I recall especially some of the problems faced by colleges who were embarking on two year degree programmes in conjunction with neighbouring universities. For them there were great issues of equality to conjure with, from coping with impoverished libraries, to juggling with contact hours contracts, and the worry of how their students would be able to fit into the continuation from their initial two years. I met some fine people in such colleges who were at that time feeling rather deskilled by the moves being made in HE, contrary to what one might have expected.

■ Conferences for general 'membership' were a feature of both the LTSN and ESCalate. Those for the LTSN were for the Subject Centres, while ESCalate's were for any colleagues in Education departments who wished to attend – accessed through their ESCalate

representative. The two kinds of events had different flavours: LTSN was the 'in crowd' talking about the LTSN and HE agenda, while ESCalate was more focussed on our own subject concerns. In the latter it was very good to meet the people around the country who were supporting what the subject centres were trying to facilitate.

■ Internal meetings with Liz Hankinson and the secretarial staff were frequent - regular weekly meetings to keep ourselves on track, and ad hoc ones to deal with the many glitches that always accompany the establishment of a new enterprise. Many good laughs helped to ease the tensions in those early months, thanks to all the team.

Happy memories of the beginnings of something that has grown impressively in the six and a half years since I left it! I do not think that we in Britain have fully appreciated how much the funding authorities invested in teaching and learning in HE. Certainly, more recent experience I

have had in a wider EU context suggests that many countries would have envied the LTSN and the varied guidance it provided, and colleagues across Europe and in many other countries keenly follow the useful inspiration provided by the subject centres.



Arlene Gilpin
Education Consultant

Arlene Gilpin was Manager of ESCalate until 2003 when she retired. Before assuming this role she had been a teacher and researcher in the Graduate School of Education, latterly with the additional administrative responsibility of Director of Teaching Quality. Since retiring she has worked on a number of European funded projects aimed at improving standards in higher education in many countries, including Eastern Europe and Latin America, and most recently in Africa. She has also worked on United Nations projects related to assessing teaching and learning quality in Middle Eastern universities. She now lives in Andalucia, Spain.

Bart McGettrick outlines the support that ESCalate has provided to those involved in academic research and the way it has helped them to make their work known to a wider audience. ►

Touching hearts and minds

A decade of work by ESCalate has served the cause of education with creativity, insight and professionalism. The influence of this in universities and related schools and other places where education takes place cannot be overestimated. The work of ESCalate has given a status to the subject and the practices of education when it has been needed. It has been a personal privilege to see this development year on year.

ESCalate has given coherence to the field of scholarly enquiry and professional practice. It has

contributed significantly to the literature and the disparate products of its reviews, reports and projects. In particular it has given opportunities to early writers and researchers contributing to literature which has a significant impact and has achieved high standards. The accessibility of its publications has been matched by their importance as contributions to educational thought.

A feature of this has been the exceptional range of academic enquiry which ESCalate has focused on. Not only has it successfully covered the

educational systems of the four nations of the UK but the range of educational foci and interests which this illuminates.

It has given researchers and scholars a focus for both the creation of educational knowledge and its dissemination. As part of the Academy it has properly seen its role as the creator of knowledge and not only its dissemination. ESCalate has known where there is innovation and excitement in the field of education, seeking these out and making the ideas and practices more widely available. That has



ESCalate has created communities of scholarship through its workshops which have touched every part of the country and every level in the education system



been a most valuable service to Faculties and Departments of Education.

Ultimately education is embodied and alive, living in the hearts and minds of people. ESCalate has been one of the few organisations which has touched those hearts and minds, ESCalate has brought together academics and practitioners in interesting and creative ways. It has been unstinting in its efforts to support learning. In doing so it has helped in the creation of new thought. Not the simplicity of concepts of “delivering the curriculum” or “knowledge transfer” but the more challenging concepts of forming people in their values and ideals. ESCalate has been led by

a deep understanding of the meaning and power of educational thought, and has offered opportunities for debate and discussion of these ideas.

As part of the Advisory Board it would be appropriate to recognise and congratulate both the academic leadership and administrative team which have served ESCalate so well over the years. Nothing of the above could have been achieved without them. With them more has been achieved than anyone would have had a right to expect.

More than anything ESCalate has seen Education thrive as a discipline and as professional practise. In a decade of challenge that has been no mean feat!



Bart McGettrick
Dean of Education,
Liverpool Hope
University

Bart McGettrick is Dean of Education at Liverpool Hope University. He is Emeritus Professor of Education and also Dean Emeritus, of the Faculty of Education at the University of Glasgow.

He has widespread international experience and is a Regent of Bethlehem University, Palestine and is heavily involved in Christian Education in The Holy Land. He undertakes work with the First Nations of Canada, and works on projects in India, Lithuania and other challenging settings overseas.

He is a member of the Scottish Social Services Council, dealing with aspects of Social Work and Social Care. He is also responsible for setting up the Scottish Forum for Professional Ethics in Scotland, in addition to the Hope Forum for Professional Ethics in Liverpool. He chairs a number of Boards of Governors of schools and other organisations.



Jean Murray

highlights the importance of supporting teacher educators in the development of their research capacities and access to professional learning. ►

Developing learning opportunities for teacher educators

The words of Bart McGettrick in this issue aptly sum up the contribution which ESCalate has made to education as a discipline over the last ten years. My intention here is to reflect on ESCalate's support for teacher education in particular.

Since its inception ESCalate has made strong contributions to developing provision in the induction and research development of teacher educators. This commitment reflects the principle that, since teacher educators have central roles in the education of intending and serving teachers, the quality of the provision made for their development as learners and as HE practitioners is an important issue for organisations, such as ESCalate, to address.

I have been privileged to be involved in a number of ESCalate projects in the areas of academic/professional development for teacher educators, including a survey on induction provision in England. The survey, published in the *European Journal of Teacher Education*, showed that provision for those moving from professional backgrounds into teacher



Since its inception ESCalate has made strong contributions to developing provision in the induction and research development of teacher educators.



education work in HE was inconsistent and often inadequate, so relevant findings on what created an 'expansive learning environment' during induction were used to inform a series of ESCalate workshops across the UK (this is an on-going project, led by Pete Boyd of Cumbria University and myself). The survey, together with research by Pete and his colleague Kim Harris, has also led to the writing of a set of induction guidelines published by ESCalate¹. Further Escalate support for research has come through the funding of a project, with Pat Mahony (Roehampton University), looking at teacher educators' research trajectories. This project too will result in both conventional publications and suggestions for improving provision for doctoral students and Early Career Researchers in teacher education.

In terms of research capacity building in teacher education, since 2006 ESCalate has co-funded (with the TLRP, BERA and UCET) the development of the work of the Teacher Education Group (TEG), led by Ian Menter (University of Glasgow) and Pat Mahony. Of particular note here is the mapping of UK teacher education research between 2000 and 2008²). In 2008/09 ESCalate also funded the provision of a short series of colloquia set within the ESRC Teacher Education Research Network (TERN), a research capacity building network in the North West of England. These colloquia enabled the TERN project team (Marion Jones and

Grant Stanley, Liverpool John Moores University, Olwen McNamara, Manchester University, and myself) to enrich the research development programme within the project and to offer Early Career Researchers additional chances to learn from senior researchers in teacher education.

Cumulatively, these projects have undoubtedly contributed to developing the provision for teacher educators' academic/professional learning. This in turn has contributed to the strengthening of the academic base of teacher education in the UK. It has been my privilege to be involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of these collaborative ESCalate projects, which have been important parts of my own academic/professional development. A key factor in this learning has been the rich academic network I have been able to form with colleagues in UK universities and beyond. ESCalate's role in providing research grants and supporting the dissemination of knowledge across the sector is well known, but in my view one of the most powerful, and sometimes hidden, contributions of ESCalate to the discipline of education over the last ten years has been in the stimulation of such academic networks and the development of extensive learning opportunities within them.

¹ <http://escalate.ac.uk/3662>

² <http://escalate.ac.uk/6698>

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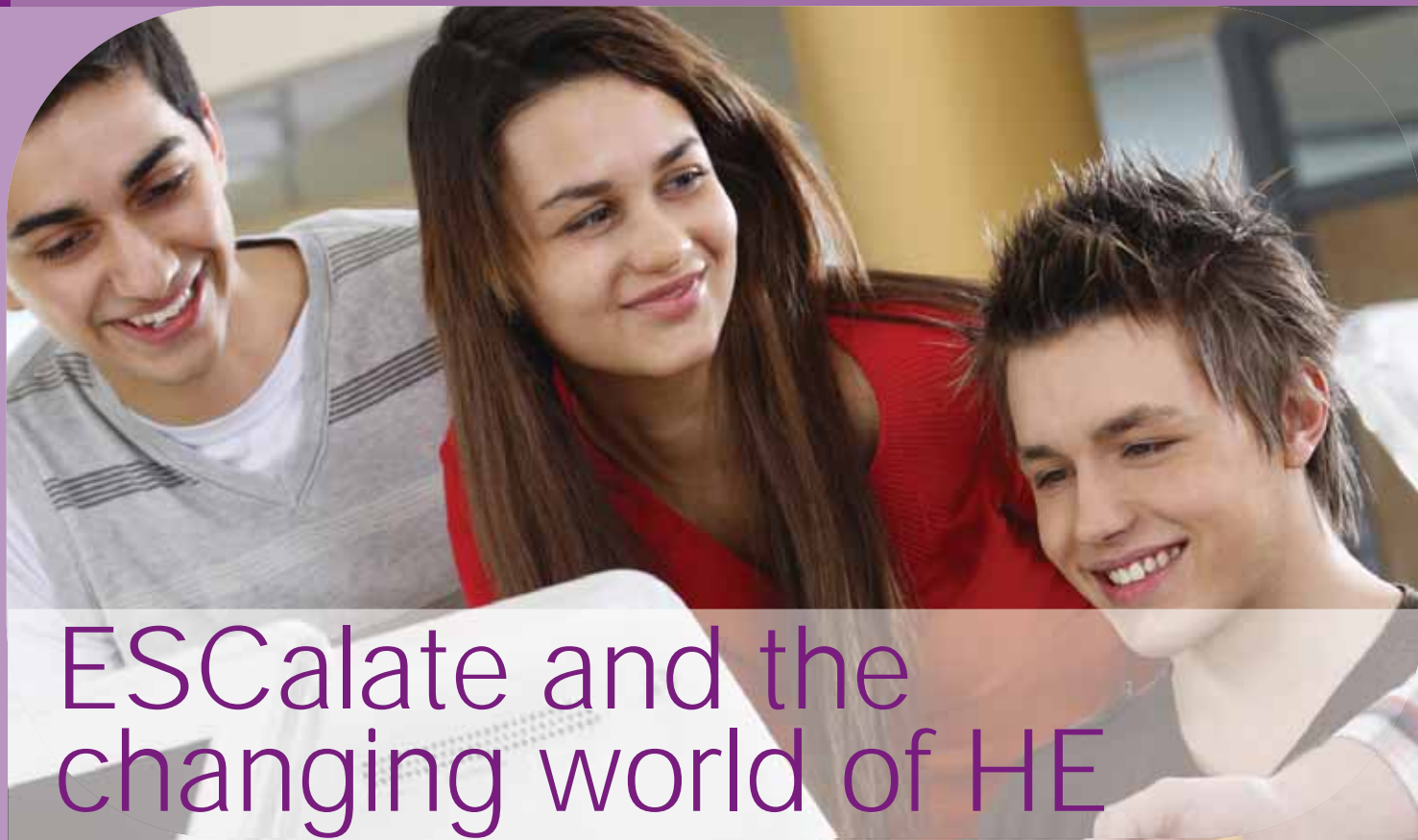


Jean Murray
University of
East London

Jean Murray is Professor of Education in the Cass School of Education at the University of East London, where she is the Research Leader. She also leads the Teacher Education research group in the School and teaches on doctoral courses.

Building on her background in schooling and teacher education, Jean's research interests focus on exploring the academic and professional identities of teacher educators and their induction and career development within the higher education sector. She is currently leading an ESRC funded research capacity building project, the Teacher Education Research Network (TEAN) in the North West of England. Jean is an Associate Director of ESCalate, and the co-leader of the ESCalate provision for academic induction.

Tony Brown explains the scope of ESCalate's work and the diversity of its reach while anticipating possible changes to come. ►



ESCalate and the changing world of HE

“Those who have criticised ESCalate for trying to cover too much ground... must nevertheless acknowledge that a subject centre focusing on education is going to have an eclectic approach.”

As ESCalate's Director for the last few years, I've seen ESCalate manage the changing dynamics in the HE sector and in education. There are a number of principles which have guided us over the last few years.

First the maintenance of an independent voice that seeks to speak up for academics in education departments. Since this is difficult given the wide range of activities that are included in education, it has been imperative that we retain practising academics as

members of ESCalate staff. Of those academic staff based in Bristol, all have contributed to teaching in the Graduate School of Education, all have published in academic peer reviewed journals and all have continued to supervise students. This has been part of the contribution made in return for the very effective and supportive 'hosting' that the University of Bristol has carried out over the years. In addition, we have two Associate Directors based in University of East London and the University of Plymouth – both active teachers and researchers. To

broaden what is heard from the 'voice of the community' we have produced a number of publications where individuals and teams of academics have presented their views and their work. Hopefully, what ESCalate has achieved is a diversity of academic views that reflect Bart McGettrick's definition of a professional as someone who is entrusted to manage dangerous modalities.. In a society where viewpoints have become increasingly subject to regulation, the role of the higher education professional must include taking up unpopular, risky positions and viewpoints. If this is not possible, then the higher education project is likely to be suffocated.

ESCalate has always sought to provide seed corn funding for new researchers, workshops and induction guides for academics new to HE, publications by outstanding academics in the field of education, and a space for new writers and new ideas. We have tried to maintain a breadth that acknowledges undergraduate education studies, postgraduate and now Masters-level courses in Initial Teacher Education, the needs of teacher educators, lifelong learning and continuing education, and part time and distance learning programmes

as well as full time campus-based studies. This diversity is set to increase rather than decrease. Those who have criticised ESCalate for trying to cover too much ground, perhaps a justifiable criticism, must nevertheless acknowledge that a subject centre focusing on education is going to have an eclectic approach.

As we wait for the new Westminster coalition government to begin its work and possibly to produce an emergency budget in the next few weeks, we know that higher education can become a site for further cuts and challenges. There is a real political edge to decisions that seek to reduce the resource base, whilst over-stimulating student expectation of even greater quality. What is without doubt, I believe, is that the student voice will not diminish. My concern is that it can be heard as part of a principled dialogue between higher education professionals and those engaged in study. My fear is that those who wish to manipulate higher education for non-educational purposes may seek advantage. Academics in education departments, and education students, wherever they are studying higher education, must guard against distractions and focus on the quality of the education experience. That will be hard to achieve. It will be made

much harder if student fees are increased. It may be made impossible if variable fees are used as a mechanism for setting universities against each other. There certainly are dangerous modalities to be managed and we need a new sense of academic freedom and responsibility to be exercised across the piece if we are to maintain what is best in higher education in the UK.



Tony Brown
ESCalate,
University of Bristol

Tony Brown taught extensively in primary and secondary schools before becoming an LEA curriculum adviser and working in teacher education. He taught at the College of St Mark & St John in Plymouth for ten years and then moved on to the University of Hull as Head of Centre for Learning Development.

He began working at ESCalate six years ago as Manager and is currently the Centre Director. Tony will be stepping down from this role in July and wishes every success to the new Director and the ESCalate team

Alison Jackson offers a personal perspective on how her role contributed to ESCalate's work in the areas of pedagogy, curriculum improvement and staff development for teacher educators. She then tells us about how she has developed this role in her work with TEAN. ►

Responding to the needs of the teaching community

I joined St Martin's College in 2005 after responding to an advertisement which asked for a lecturer to contribute to ESCalate's work in support and advice on pedagogy, curriculum enhancement and staff development in relation to teacher education. In those days, ESCalate was not as easily found on Google as it is now and I well remember the other candidates at the interview asking me if I knew what ESCalate was all about; I certainly found out over the next four years! St Martin's, I learned, had been responsible for the initial teacher education element of ESCalate's work plan since 2003. Its work programmes each year responded to the needs of the teacher education community and the priorities of the Higher Education Academy. Newly arrived from teaching in school, and clutching my higher degrees in education in my hand, I set about deciphering the meanings of lists of acronyms and learning the delights of Birmingham New Street station, as I waited for the train for Bristol en route for meetings with the ESCalate team.

Between 2005 and 2009 a team dedicated to Initial Teacher

Education – myself, Sue Bloxham, Sam Twiselton and a team of administrative support – ensured that ESCalate at St Martin's, and then ESCalate at the University of Cumbria when the college gained university status in 2007, flourished. The ITE conference held every May became well established as a key forum for teacher educators to get together to discuss and share thoughts and inspirations concerning their research and practice. A range of seminars and workshops on varied topics – extended from the original brief to include such things as Problem-Based Learning, assessment, teaching as a Masters level profession, reflection, creativity, Every Child Matters – all contributed to the growing reputation of ESCalate at Cumbria. Our philosophy of being there for teacher educators as they fulfil their demanding role is based on the desire to foster collaborative working in a supportive, non-threatening way and to promote high quality research and scholarly opportunities to raise the profile of teacher education. Colleagues from across the four nations of the UK, as well the University of Cumbria





The ESCalate ITE conference held every May became well established as a key forum for teacher educators to get together to discuss and share thoughts and inspirations concerning their research and practice.



itself, have benefited from this work.

Since September 2009 we are no longer ESCalate Cumbria but have formed a new identity with TEAN, the Teacher Education Advancement Network, which is founded on the rigorous principles (outlined above) that we established with ESCalate. The conference continues under our new name and we are delighted to be sponsored by ESCalate for this. We have also run a series of workshops for New Teacher Educators.

Congratulations to ESCalate on its first 10 years and TEAN looks forward to further collaboration with the subject centre as it embarks upon its new decade.



Alison Jackson
TEAN,
University of Cumbria

Alison Jackson is Director of the Teacher Education Advancement Network based at the University of Cumbria. Her background is in secondary education and her research interests are: Initial Teacher Education, school leadership, school culture, teacher identity, teacher professionalism, teaching as a Masters level profession.

The following articles are from people who have received award funding from us to develop a research project or area of scholarly activity. They range from early academics receiving a student award, to those who have received more substantial amounts to support larger scale projects.

Jenny Moon

explains how she was able to develop her research skills and publish her findings through ESCalate support and encouragement. ►



The power of the written word

I would say that my professional life has been better because ESCalate was there with its friendly staff, support, wide networks and the potential for the initiation of exciting projects.

The first contact was around eight years ago when I was in a very unsatisfactory educational development post, being told not

to write or do research as I was apparently a 'non-academic'! ESCalate gave me a grant to support work on the learning of students from non-traditional backgrounds and this gave me a sense of value, and given that I had a grant, no-one was going to stop me. More or less since that time, I have been asked to evaluate grant



ESCalate gave me a grant to support work on the learning of students from non-traditional backgrounds and this gave me a sense of value...



me to see if I agree with myself, or could hone the thinking better.

Then I was asked to write a second commissioned piece of work, again a Discussion Series booklet, on using academic assertiveness to enhance groupwork ('Making Groups Work'). The contents of this came from making generic some work I had been doing with media students and extending some ideas from a book that I had just written.

In 2007, in collaboration with ESCalate I ran a series of workshops around the theme of reflective learning. They gave rise to much discussion and exchange of practice on the day and a wealth of resources for use by the community via the ESCalate website.

I have been in touch with ESCalate again recently about writing a pack to support tutors in running sessions on oral storytelling for students; this is a source of strong personal interest for me and once placed, it is available for reading/downloading from the ESCalate web site¹.

So ESCalate has meant a lot to me – friendly support, an avenue for publication, a stimulant for thinking, opportunities and the chance to communicate with others from different disciplines.

I am sure that there are many others who benefit in similar ways from ESCalate and other such subject centres.

¹ <http://escalate.ac.uk/7121>



Jenny Moon
Bournemouth
University and
Freelance Consultant

Jenny Moon works part time as Associate Professor in the Centre for Excellence in Media Practice at Bournemouth University. She also works freelance in higher education at home and abroad. She has written ten books on reflective learning, critical thinking, programme and module structure, academic assertiveness and the role of story in higher education.

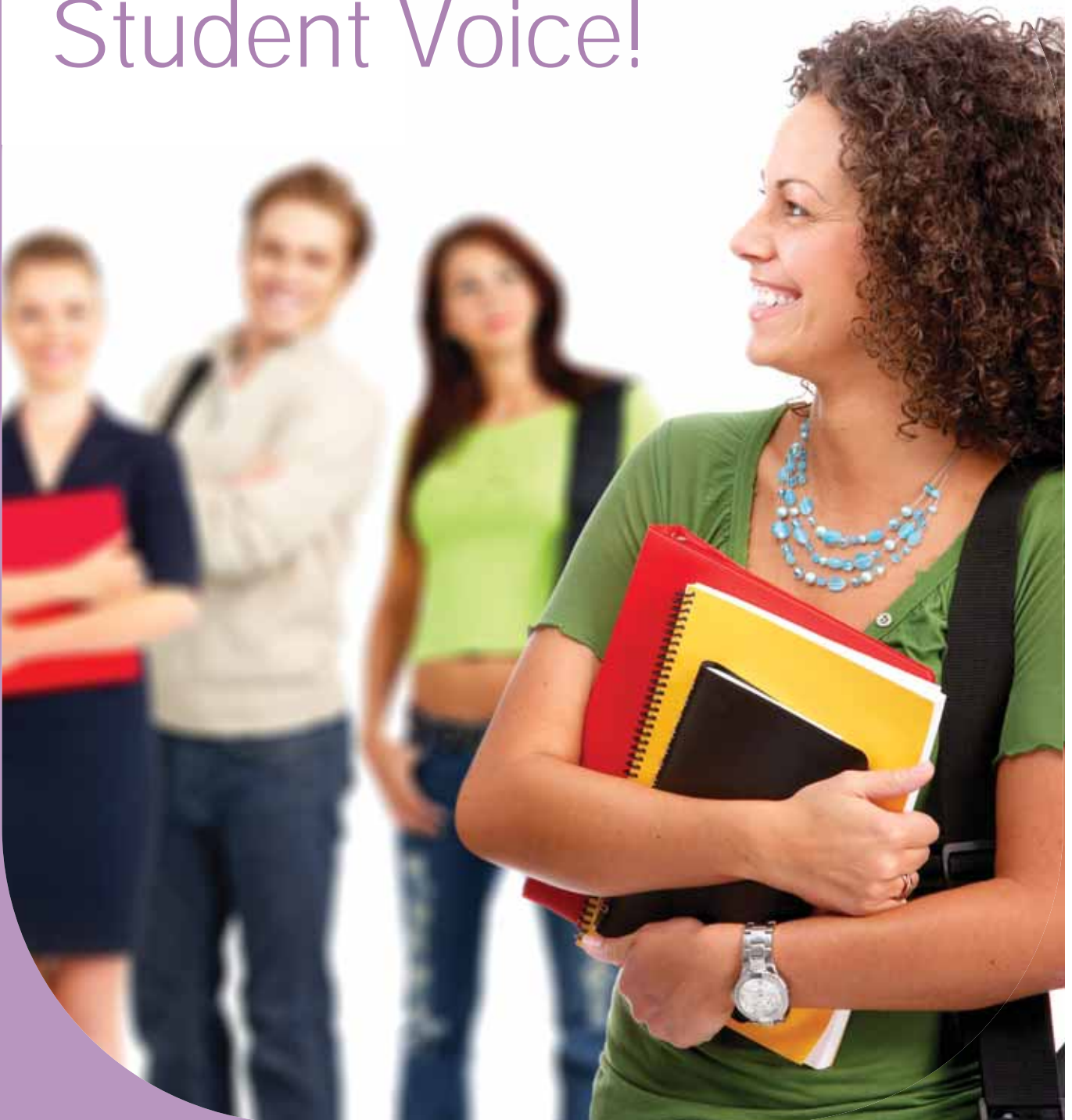
proposals for others, hoping that others can benefit from ESCalate funding in the manner that I did.

ESCalate then commissioned me to do some writing for them. I wrote a Discussion Series booklet on critical thinking ('We Seek it Here.....') and various smaller articles on topics such as the role of writing in higher education learning – in my opinion a seriously neglected issue. All the writing I do is research. It involves seeking information, and then relating that to the way things actually are, or could be. Writing an idea down enables

Fiona Campbell

argues passionately for the inclusion of the student voice in all aspects of Higher Education and provides an overview of the two projects that ESCalate supported as a way of mainstreaming this once marginal area. ►

Let's hear it for the Student Voice!



Thank you, ESCalate! Your recognition of the worth of our ideas and the funding you provided enabled the Hearing the Student Voice team to undertake two fascinating projects which we hope have contributed to the prominence which the student voice is now given in higher education.

Our interest in this area developed from my own experience at Edinburgh Napier University where our use of the student voice in academic professional development had shown it to have a significant impact. The project team received an ESCalate grant in early 2006 to investigate how student voices can be employed to enhance academic practice. Of course, people were already using the student voice but perhaps what we did was different – different then, anyway:

- We valued the physicality of the actual voice and how hearing it enabled staff to engage with the student perspective not only by hearing what was said but also how it was said.
- We asked students to contribute their views on their experiences of learning,

teaching and assessment – rather than their programmes of study – and then we brought these views directly into the professional development arena.

As Asmar, following a similar intervention in her own institution, noted:

*Bringing together of faculty and students for discussion of the **process** of teaching and learning in which they are jointly involved (rather than the usual focus on the **content** of the curriculum) is as rare as it is valuable.*
(Asmar, 1999)

The funding for the first project enabled the team and our collaborators to be involved in developing and evaluating eight case studies whose work focussed on different purposes and using different approaches, media and mechanisms.

Examples include:

- How we like to be taught: recording student views on learning and teaching to create a DVD used to support staff development
- My first year experience: constructing student video diaries

- Sharing experiences: staff and students working as peers in a joint residential workshop
- Using the student voice in staff development to progress a pilot PDP module

To further disseminate our work, three day-long seminars were held in London, Leeds and Glasgow with participants representing more than 60 institutions. Encouragingly, and appropriately, there was also strong involvement from students who engaged with us enthusiastically and provided many rich and insightful perspectives. These events contributed to our project's aim of developing a community of practice of staff equipped to use the student voice within professional development which was further supported with guidance for staff as to how to capture and use the student voice, templates of our developed forms for the process and opportunities to engage with like-minded others.

An outcome of the first project was the value students could bring if enabled to participate in curriculum design and development and when a further round of ESCalate funding ►



became available in 2008 we successfully bid for a project to investigate this further. The outcomes of the second project included 11 case studies of practice from different institutions that focussed on student assessment, feedback and the design of induction materials for international students.

We aimed to engage the sector and held a national conference at Leeds Metropolitan University in May 2009 which was attended by over 60 staff representing 25 institutions. Again, the student contributions added a fresh and thought-provoking element to the day.

A significant conclusion from our work is that hearing the depth

and clarity of the student voice surprises, engages and motivates staff. Hearing the spoken word itself moves staff as it builds an emotional connection between speaker and listener. When the student voice is employed within appropriate professional development contexts staff often find this a positive experience and identify – and commit to – changes in academic practice as a result: the two criteria identified as measures of the impact of professional development interventions by Rust (1998).

We also noticed that the very process of asking students their views and responding to them is beneficial for them. When students perceive that their views are valued by their institution and, particularly,

when they see a direct benefit of their contribution, there is evidence that there is increased engagement with their programmes of study (QAA, 2005). It may have taken us years to find this out but a student identified this early in our work:

There should be more listening to the students. More listening would create more participation with students, more involvement, more interest from students.
(student project participant)

In the four years since we originally received our initial grant there have been many changes in the roles of the project team (who are drawn from Birmingham City, Edinburgh Napier, Leeds



A significant conclusion from our work is that hearing the depth and clarity of the student voice surprises, engages and motivates staff.



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Asmar, C (1999) 'Scholarship, experience or both? A developer's approach to cross-cultural teaching' *International Journal for Academic Development* 4 (1)

QAA (2005) *Outcomes from institutional audit. Student representation and feedback arrangements* QAA, Gloucester

Rust, C (1998) 'The impact of educational development workshops on teachers' practice' *International Journal for Academic Development* 3 (1)

Further information including the final reports and full case studies is available on the project websites:

Hearing the student voice: promoting and encouraging the effective use of the student voice to enhance in learning, teaching and assessment in higher education:

www2.napier.ac.uk/studentvoices
<http://escalate.ac.uk/2222>

Hearing the student voice: involving students in curriculum design and delivery:

www2.napier.ac.uk/studentvoices/curriculum
<http://escalate.ac.uk/4314>

Metropolitan and Westminster universities). Two of our original team members emigrated (separately!) to America, two new members have come on board and all have different roles

A key outcome for the project team from participating in the projects has been the valuable time and opportunity it has provided us with for the exchange of ideas, for reflection and for our own professional development. We all retain an enthusiasm for the student voice and facilitate sessions within our own institutions or – by invitation – at external events to encourage colleagues to develop approaches and mechanisms to enable them to hear – and to heed – student voices.

Coming full circle, my own institution employs the student voice in many ways – in workshops, focus groups, conferences, DVDs, podcasts, evaluations and online discussions among others – and we seek to demonstrate through its use that enhancing the experience of our students is the aim in all we seek to do.

Our project took place at a time when there was a wider groundswell of activity in education around student engagement and we are pleased to have been part of that and to have contributed to it. Thank you ESCalate for giving us that opportunity and best wishes for your next 10 years!



Fiona Campbell
Edinburgh Napier University

As Head of Professional Development at Edinburgh Napier University, her role involves facilitating the enhancement of academic practice across the University through the provision of learning opportunities for staff (including workshops, online sessions, academic induction and staff conferences) and enabling staff to create more flexible and effective provision for students through technology-enhanced learning.

She is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and co-chair of the Conference Committee of Staff and Educational Development Association.

Diane Thurston wanted to enable practitioners in the lifelong learning sector to research more into their own working contexts - she accessed ESCalate funding in order to do this and explains here how the CETTnet Research Network came about ►

The origins of the CETTnet practitioner network

If we are serious about making the most of learning opportunities, including the idea of improving them, then we need very good information about what people currently do, why they do it, and why they keep doing it. (James and Diment, 2003: 407)

In summer of 2008, I had a familiar and typically heated discussion with a colleague about the need to support research in the lifelong learning sector (LLS). Both of us were in the role of lecturer and student (I was completing my MA in Education and my colleague was and is working on her PHD) and both of us were keenly aware of research activity in our sector, support

needs felt by individuals and teams, and the substantial interest from practitioners in undertaking research of varying sorts.

We made two decisions as a result of this discussion – we needed to seek funding to support a research network for practitioners in the LLS and we needed to learn more about the work of ESCalate.

For us the importance of the network was to engage practitioners in researching their own working contexts, and to increase research capacity within the sector. We knew of the wealth of research on FE by external researchers, and were acutely aware of the need for more research

generated within the sector by practitioners. We viewed practitioner research as more than a “stepping off point”, and more descriptive approaches to data collection and reporting as part of an interpretivist research tradition (Bartlett and Barton, 2006: 396). We strongly felt that teachers need to “reflect critically on the wider institutional, policy, social and cultural issues that enable or constrain their practice” (Morton et al., 2006: 5) which we felt keenly in the post-compulsory setting.

Our practitioner research network, the CETTnet research network, was launched in Nov 2008, with funding from a grant from ESCalate, and is gaining in strength and continuing to develop.

So how did it all happen? We had noted the negative impact of pressures within the sector on the development of research capacity. We were familiar with a discourse of deficit in reference to the LLS which permeated this period¹. However, our experience of applying for a grant from ESCalate in 2008 was a rewarding professional experience, running counter to our expectations.

We were not expecting the personal approach that the ESCalate team members adopted, nor the developmental approach to the funding process or the access to members of the ESCalate team.



We were not expecting the personal approach that the ESCalate team members adopted, nor the developmental approach to the funding process or the access to members of the ESCalate team. An outline proposal was invited and constructive and encouraging feedback was given, we had productive phone conversations with the ESCalate projects team which helped us to shape our approach to the CETTnet project but also made us consider how the potential contribution of CETTnet members to the research debate was valued, and importantly helped us to extend our research horizons.

ESCalate has gone on to contribute to our research network and the work of Success North CETT more widely, contributing to meetings of the CETTnet practitioner group, providing keynote speakers and workshop facilitators from the ESCalate team at five subsequent CETT conferences. Tony Brown and Julie Hughes are now working with the course leader for BA and MA in Lifelong Learning and Professional Development to support research and scholarly activity among students and members of the CETTnet group, who come from a range of education settings. Contact with both Julie and Tony has been described as “inspiring” by them, and the groups have been motivated to engage in their own collaborative research.

“We are still concerned about pressures on the sector and the danger of resulting conformity which can run counter to genuine enquiry, and note that processes ostensibly put in place to support teacher learning may be subverted within a culture of control” (Avis, 2002; O’Leary, 2006).

As our practitioner research network develops and our research activity grows, we are more aware of the need for confidence-building to support capacity in our sector, and view in the ESCalate approach key lessons for organisations aiming to provide this support.



Diane Thurston
Newcastle College

Diane started teaching in Egypt in 1989 and has worked as an EFL, ESOL and literacy tutor and teacher educator in the UK, abroad and online. She started work at the Teaching Development Centre at Newcastle College in 2007 and manage Success North Centre of Excellence in Teacher Training.

She established the CETTnet practitioner network with her colleague, Christine Byrne, with the aim of supporting practitioner research and with a membership from all settings in the lifelong learning sector. As she embarks on her doctorate studies, she is more than ever aware of the need to support researchers in the sector!

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¹ DfES, 2002; DfES, 2003; DfES, 2004; DfES, 2006

Joe Gazdula writes from a lecturer's point of view about the support ESCalate has given to one of his students. ►

Shooting Stars research with ESCalate

My involvement with ESCalate started when I submitted a case study to Escalate on a Dragons' Den project our Enterprise Education students were doing in primary schools and I offered to help with the first ESCalate student conference, something I really enjoyed.

I attended the first ever Escalate Student Conference in 2009 at Aston University not really knowing what to expect. To be on the safe side I took two reliable students, Amanda and Javed, and a set of dance mats to help our session on Student Research and Enterprise. Both Amanda and Javed had proved reliable students on their Education Studies Course at Liverpool Hope University and were excellent presenters, but none of us imagined just what a great conference it would turn out to be.

Our presentation went well enough but that was just the start of things. During the Conference we had a friendly chat with the

Conference leader Tony Brown about writing up some of the things we had discussed in our presentation. One of our themes that particularly interested him was the effect of enterprise on graduate employability. At Liverpool Hope I had worked for a number of years to put a programme together using a real world situation with a problem based learning focus. This became the Dragons' Den Project for the Enterprise Education course where students had to run after schools clubs in primary schools and Amanda and Javed had both taken part. Tony felt we should write this up as a paper, but I was struggling for time and he suggested either Amanda or Javed might like to apply for a student grant from ESCalate to fund the paper with me acting as the mentor.

As Javed had been accepted for a Post Graduate Certificate in Education, Amanda took up Tony's challenge. By summer last year she had completed the application for funding her paper, *Assessing the*

Effect of a Real World Enterprise Project on Graduate Employability Skills, and co-opted me as her writing mentor. ESCalate was fantastic. After only a couple of weeks Amanda had been informed she was successful and had been awarded £2,000 to fund the research. This was only the start of a series of successes for Amanda. In July she graduated at Liverpool Hope University with a first class Degree and was offered a series of lectureships, finally accepting the post of Early Years Lecturer at Halton College and starting a PhD at Manchester University. Amanda is now finishing her paper but has put some of her career success down to presenting at the ESCalate Student Conference last year and being able to show she can attract funding for research and academic writing.

This year Amanda completed her own poster presentation on her paper at ESCalate's Second Student Conference at Glamorgan University in April of this year but the support didn't end there. They have also offered



“Amanda...has put some of her career success down to presenting at the ESCalate Student Conference last year and being able to show she can attract funding for research and academic writing.”

Amanda support in helping with the follow up paperwork and even to find a peer reviewed journal to ensure it gets published.

Amanda is highly delighted with the approach taken by ESCalate to helping students and said “Escalate give highly skilled and professional help to students which

complements their funding approach really well. They are friendly and approachable and you never feel you're researching on your own. I would recommend any student interested in researching to contact them.”

As for myself, I can't wait for next year's conference!

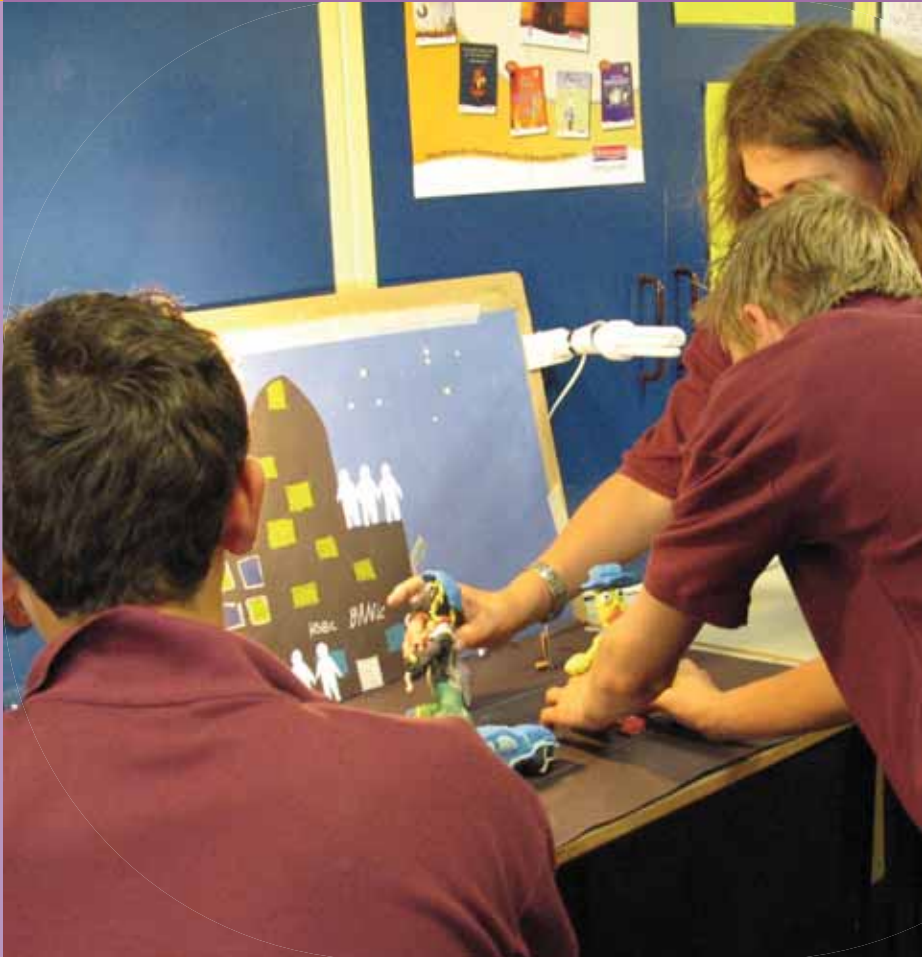


Joe Gazdula
Liverpool Hope
University

Joe Gazdula is Head of Education and Society at Liverpool Hope University, a job he combines with his role as the Education Deanery Enterprise Fellow. A dynamic individual, Joe is also Managing Director of his own company, UBERWEB, a digital innovation company which offers digital/enterprise consultancy and owns the rights to a number of digital products including M.A.T.S. a multiple activity system for children and SHARK, a digital protection system. Joe is always on the lookout for innovative projects and lists enterprise education, consultancy, enterprise research and completing his Doctorate as critical interests.

Enterprise education using problem based learning: An analysis of 'real world' enterprise projects on undergraduate employability. <http://escalate.ac.uk/6287>

Britta Pollmuller believes strongly in the power of animation projects to support the development of literacy, numeracy and social skills in secondary school pupils. Here she details an ESCalate-funded project that enabled her to research into the role that animation can play in the curriculum. ►



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Animation work is a proven way to build self confidence in the learner's creative abilities.
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Schooltoons - animation and creativity in education

Schooltoons, an animation resource pack for schools, is the end result of a three year research project, exploring ways to make animation a vital part of the secondary school curriculum.

The ESCalate research grant allowed us to undertake a series of action research-based case studies, which observed GCSE and BTEC Media students engaged in a range of animation projects. These case studies identified the extremely

valuable part animation can play in enhancing literacy, numeracy and social skills, and visual creativity amongst pupils of all ages. They also highlighted the types of practical and theoretical support teachers urgently need to teach animation effectively, and offer practical, classroom-friendly solutions.

The pack includes lesson plans, worksheets, technical advice, and schemes of work. Theory is intercut with practical activities throughout the pack, covering a wide range of styles, from model animation to drawn. A series of schemes of work take the reader from initial idea to finished project, with useful advice along the way.

Animation work is a proven way to build self confidence in the learner's creative abilities. The hands on, personal engagement which the process demands, allows each individual to take immediate ownership of his/her work. Pupils truly care about the outcomes, and strive to reach ever more demanding goals. The multifaced nature of the process provides learners with many different points of engagement and an open ended path into discovery. This quote from a school teacher about an often excluded student says it all:

Even Liam stood in front of me jumping up and down with the

excitement of doing animation next year!! He has never been excited about anything he does in school.

And this, from a Head of Art and Design at a secondary school in Norfolk:

In line with national averages, of the 17 students involved four have some kind of learning difficulty. The animation project enabled these students to achieve in a way that I had not witnessed before. They became confident and articulate, in part due to working within a safe environment for a concentrated amount of time, but also due to the high expectations placed upon them and their loyalty to 'the group'.

I can see that it is a very expressive medium and that the language of movement itself is powerful and individual, akin to dance perhaps, but sharing the language of framing and composition with photography and painting. The project created opportunities for pupils to explore the value of animation as part of the creative industry.

We have now found a publisher and hopefully *The Teachers' Animation Toolkit* will be available to schools and teachers across the UK and internationally.



Britta Pollmuller
Media Projects East/
Norwich University
College of the Arts

Britta Pollmuller is a contemporary new media artist, teacher-as-artist and researcher working within Norwich University College of the Arts. She lectures in Games Art and Design, Animation, Photography, Machinima and Film. As company co-director (Media Projects East: www.mediaprojectseast.co.uk) Britta works with community groups and schools around the themes of media arts, creativity and social issues. For example 'Home Truths' whereby young people from Norfolk have worked together to write a book for schools about the issues which can lead to becoming homeless.

Schooltoons is a Norwich University College of the Arts project, in partnership with Media Projects East Ltd and supported by ESCalate, NESTA and Creative Partnerships.

Example of animations:
http://schooltoons.ning.com/video/animatedmusicvideo_swmv-1

Helena Mitchell


became increasingly interested in issues of student employability as part of her work and with the help of an ESCalate grant has been able to conduct further research into this crucial area. ►

Student Employability - what are the issues?


My introduction to ESCalate was in the spring of 2003. I was invited to be part of a discussion with a number of colleagues from other universities who were already involved in subject centre working, and was fascinated by the different projects being undertaken. The opportunity to work with ESCalate came shortly after that. The HEA was funding a number of projects on developing employability for undergraduate students, and ESCalate was to run one of these. I had become increasingly interested in student employability since becoming course leader for a new Early Childhood Studies Degree. Most programmes in a school of Education lead to Qualified Teacher Status, so have a vocational outcome. With an Early Childhood Studies degree students wanted to know what

their career options were on graduating; a question that is even more pertinent now. Through my involvement in the project with ESCalate, and ESECT (Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team) I discovered, of course, that employability is far more than a focus on career options, or indeed on transferable skills, but involves a far deeper interrogation of knowledge, understanding and values.

Working with Dr Julie Anderson, who was leading the project for ESCalate, was a great opportunity. We set up a small research project, trawled a range of sources to gather literature about approaches to employability, then gathered data about student views on employability and career options. We collected data from colleagues at other institutions. What did employability mean to them? How should HEIs engage with



...it was also the opportunity that ESCalate offered to go beyond subject boundaries, and to work with academics in different disciplines which provided a valuable resource.



employability? The range of answers were on a continuum from very positive to very negative! Analysis of the data threw up varied and interesting results which we presented in different contexts. One of the benefits was attending employability-focused conferences and discovering many new contacts in the field. Some of the work undertaken by colleagues in other subject associations was revealing and helped the development of our project, deepening our understanding of how the curriculum needs to foster student self knowledge, reflection, and a confident engagement with life long learning.



Helena Mitchell
Westminster
Institute of
Education, Oxford
Brookes University

Helena Mitchell is Head of Department for Early Childhood and Primary Education at Westminster Institute of Education, Oxford Brookes University. The Department includes both primary teacher education, and also non QTS degrees in Early Childhood and Education Studies. Her research work has included a focus on early literacy, professional development of teachers and practitioners, and also employability issues for students on non QTS programmes.

For our project, Julie assembled the data into two ESCalate publications on employability, one for students¹ and one for staff². We also presented papers at a number of conferences including UCET and BERA.

Involvement with ESCalate was a clear benefit. But it was also the opportunity that ESCalate offered to go beyond subject boundaries, and to work with academics in different disciplines which provided a valuable resource. Because education is often practice based it feels as though it is in a half way position between practice and academic theory. Working with academics from

different disciplines dispelled that view, both providing access to networks and resources from other subject areas, and deeper perspectives on approaches to employability and the content and structure of degree programmes.

Since its completion, the employability project has continued to inform our planning for student programmes. It has enabled engagement in relevant research and fostered new networks. Not only are the published resources very useful, but the positive and energetic support of the ESCalate team at Bristol has been invaluable.

¹ <http://escalate.ac.uk/7197>

² <http://escalate.ac.uk/2988>

Gordon Joyes was instrumental in supporting his education students' use of video to help them and their peers reflect on the research process. ▶

The value of using Video Narratives for research



I therefore decided to video record my successful students talking through their research at the time of their viva and used these as a resource for other students

I was delighted to be asked to write a short piece on how ESCalate has supported my work and I would like to focus on the way the ESCalate small grant scheme supported the realisation of an important innovation that is now helping thousands of research students and academics

worldwide to develop their understanding of educational research.

The story began for me in 1996 when I began supervising research students within the School of Education at the University of Nottingham. These beginning research students were so

obviously inspired by others talking about their research - this acted as a bridge to the initially fairly incomprehensible methodology texts they needed to engage with. I therefore decided to video record my successful students talking through their research at the time of their viva and used these as a

resource for other students. When I began to develop online materials for use on our new online professional doctorate in education in 2000 I also captured video research narratives from experienced researchers who visited the School of Education and used the new online video streaming technologies available to make them more accessible.

During this time I became aware of the work by colleagues in other institutions around the use of video for research and for research teaching and decided to organise a one- day conference to share what we were doing and produce a summary report to inform practice. I applied for an ESCalate small grant in 2002 on the use of learning technologies in the teaching of research methods. This supported a workshop at the ESCalate Research Methods for Research Students conference at the Institute of Education in London in June 2002 (Joyes 2002a) as well as the ESCalate conference: Research Methods, Teaching and Learning: Effective Online Support at Birkbeck College, University of London, September 2002 (Joyes 2002b). Twenty two higher education institutions were represented and the result was an identified need for Internet-based materials to support research students in training and online video narratives as something that would add value to existing

pedagogies used in teacher-led as well as student-centred settings. This process also identified key partners, the Universities of Nottingham, Sheffield, Bath and Canterbury Christ Church who developed a successful bid under the HEFCE Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL5) for the Virtual Resources for Online Research Training project (V-ResORT).

The project ran from 2004-8 and was a great opportunity to work with colleagues from a large number of HEIs to develop, through an action research framework, a freely available flexible online resource based around searchable video narratives that subsequent evaluation has shown to be of enormous value to research students as well as academics beginning educational research. Important outcomes are publications that inform the HE community about design for learning, sustainability and the role of research in education, for example Joyes & Banks (2010). This has all been made possible by a great idea that was nurtured through some initial startup funding, the support of ESCalate for the bid to HEFCE and ongoing support through ESCalate membership on the steering group and wider contacts through the ESCalate networks.

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Useful links

www.v-resort.ac.uk



Gordon Joyes
University of
Nottingham

Gordon Joyes is Associate Professor in e-learning at the School of Education, University of Nottingham, UK where he is course leader for the Masters in Educational Research Methods, and a research student supervisor. He is an experienced developer/tutor on online postgraduate courses as well as a researcher into online tools to support learning. He was the Project Director for the HEFCE funded V-ResORT project 2004-8.

Sheena Banks praises the way in which ESCalate allows education professionals to share effective practice, new ideas, knowledge and resources. ►

ESCalate - an important com

My involvement with ESCalate goes back to 2003 when I was awarded an ESCalate small grant. This was the *e-Research: using multimedia methods for research methods teaching and learning* project completed in 2004¹. Although this was only a relatively small amount of funding a long time ago, the implementation and dissemination of that project proved to be a very important catalyst for much of what has happened to me professionally in the six years since then. Out of this small but significant 'seedcorn' funding came much bigger professional and research

opportunities. These enabled me to meet and work with new partners, leverage other externally funded projects and publish. I have been able to extend my professional practice by taking what I learnt from the ESCalate project into other projects.

Following the completion of the e-Research project in 2004, Sheffield was able to join up with Nottingham, Bath and Canterbury Christ Church University to participate in the HEFCE funded FDTL V-ReSORT project² (Virtual Resources for Online Research Training) from 2004-8. In parallel with this, I was able to become a

member of the eChina UK team from 2004-8 which gave me the opportunity to cross-fertilise knowledge from e-Research and V-ResORT into an international context.

During this time, with my colleague Dr Gordon Joyes from Nottingham University (who collaborated with me on V-ResORT) I have been able to make good use of ESCalate networks and events to disseminate our project and to build a user base of our online resources that are still available through our website – at the last count 80,000 worldwide. More recently, we have contributed chapters about our



Community of practice

experience of project research and development to a HEA publication³.

At the same time as carrying out this professional work, I have been completing my doctorate part-time. Not only have I been able to make use of online research resources available through ESCalate, I have been able to meet up and make contact with other researchers through ESCalate networks who not only have helped me with my research ideas but have often ended up as personal friends. This was especially important to me when I lost my partner in 2006.

Not only have I been able to make use of online research resources available through ESCalate, I have been able to meet up and make contact with other researchers through ESCalate networks.

Another reason I am grateful to ESCalate is because of its championing of new ideas and support for innovation. Nine years ago technology enhanced learning was still something that was new and its meaning for educational practice and research somewhat uncertain. There was very much a need for critical debate and development of research-informed practice. Because of ESCalate, I was able to make a small contribution to those debates and practice and it is to ESCalate's credit that it fosters criticality as well as consensus.

Reflecting on all of the above, I can see that ESCalate operates as a community of practice in the sense that it promotes and facilitates mutual engagement in education from which knowledge about research and practice flows, and which in turn fosters the building of multiple identities and shared discourses around the theory and practice of education. This is something that is not always easy to understand from the 'public' face of ESCalate as it is something that has to be experienced but it would be true to say that ESCalate has enhanced my professional understanding of that world and its many complexities.

¹ <http://escalate.ac.uk/1132>

² <http://escalate.ac.uk/1700>

³ www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/fdtl/FDTLVoices.pdf



Sheena Banks
University of
Sheffield

Sheena Banks has been a researcher in the School of Education at the University of Sheffield since 2001. Her research interests are technology enhanced learning, online communities of practice and intercultural e-learning. She is currently leading the development of a Virtual Graduate School at the University of Sheffield and is also a member of the Interdisciplinary Research in Socio-Digital Worlds (IRIS) programme at Sheffield.

Elisabeth Lazarus

explains how an ESCalate grant was the catalyst for her research into the potential use of videopapers with PGCE students. ►

Videopapers and Teacher

//
The ESCalate grant was our catalyst and ...has allowed the work to expand and deepen.
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In September 2004 I returned to the PGCE programme at the University of Bristol after having spent three years as Head of Faculty and an Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) in a local school to keep myself updated and grounded in the rapidly changing secondary school developments. One of the first events at the Graduate School of Education at Bristol University was a 'show-and-tell' session looking at potentials of new technologies for teaching and learning. My colleague Federica Olivero was demonstrating a new piece of software called 'Videopapers Builder' she was using for creating videopapers for disseminating research by teachers (see Olivero et al., 2004). Watching her I was really struck by the potential videopapers could have for my field of initial teacher education.

Videopapers are multimedia documents that integrate and synchronise video, images and text in one non-linear cohesive document. They can easily be created via the free software Video Paper Builder 3¹ and were developed as part of the 'Bridging Research and Practice' project at TERC in Boston, MA to create an

Education

alternative genre for the production, use and dissemination of educational research.

The idea of trialling videopapers and researching their potential for ITE took hold but it was only a Small Grant from ESCalate in spring 2005 which meant that we could start the project in earnest. We began piloting by working with small trial groups of Modern Foreign Language (MFL) PGCE students who replaced one of their assignments with a videopaper. In their videopaper they were able to select sequences and moments in their lessons (video clips), link these to children's work (slides), personal analysis and reflection (text), underpinned by research (text) and hyperlinked to resources and lesson plans – all in one place and one environment thereby creating a potentially powerful digital product (Lazarus and Olivero, 2009).

There were of course teething problems as with all technology and being able to tap into Federica's expertise as both researcher and technical advisor on the project, through the Small Grant, was invaluable to me. We collected data on areas such as:

- The process of creating and reading a videopaper

- The relationships between creating a videopaper and writing an essay and assessment
- Student teachers' perceptions of videopapers as tools to support self-reflection
- The structure and content of videopapers and comparisons of videopapers by different groups.

After positive experiences with a range of different MFL groups we have shared our findings through workshops and conferences both nationally and internationally. Meanwhile the network of teacher educators using videopapers in their work expanded within the University of Bristol and beyond to Sweden and Norway. In 2007 colleagues from Bergen, Boston and Bristol, for example, held a joint symposium on videopapers at EARLi (Olivero and Lazarus, 2007).

The ESCalate grant was our catalyst and together with funding from the Graduate School of Education at the University of Bristol has allowed the work to expand and deepen. It has also meant that this year all PGCE MFL students reflected on and demonstrated their practice and knowledge through a videopaper.

¹ <http://vpb.concord.org>

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Elisabeth Lazarus
University of Bristol

Elisabeth joined the University of Bristol in 1992 after having worked as a modern languages teacher and Head of Faculty in a range of urban and rural secondary schools. From 2004-2008 Elisabeth was the Course Director for the Graduate School of Education's PGCE Programme. She now teaches on the MEd, EdD, Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Modern Foreign Language (MFL) programme and has led this since 1994. Her many research interests and publications have been shaped by her professional background and international experience.

Angela Jaap was delighted to secure funding from ESCalate for research into the influences that shape musical development in children. Here she recounts her experiences... ▶



Pitching it right



This was a great opportunity, not only for myself in presenting at the (ESCalate) conference, but also in that a number of students and representatives from the Faculty of Education made the trip from Glasgow to Birmingham.

I am nearing the end of my PhD studies at the University of Glasgow, researching how musical gift and talent is recognised and accommodated within school. The project looks at the influences which impact on the musical development of children and how these experiences shape the young person's approach to music-making. The study involved a large group of successful and critically acclaimed international musicians, in addition to teachers and pupils from universities, conservatoires and schools across the UK.

At the end of my first year of study (2006-07) I successfully applied for a student grant from ESCalate. The grant was to help me collect data for my research from across the UK. As a beginning researcher, the process of looking for funding opportunities can (sometimes) feel a bit intimidating, from trying to find the funding

(which can be difficult in arts-based research) to the process of writing the application itself. ESCalate was different and offered support and advice from the first note of interest to raising the invoices for the grant. One aspect which I found particularly useful was the feedback on the original concept note. Applying to ESCalate was my first attempt at 'bidding' for external funding and I wasn't sure about what to do. The ESCalate team helped me, by letting me know what an expression of interest (and later a full proposal) should include, how best to estimate costings and many other aspects of the grant.

While I was still undergoing my research, in the spring of 2009, I was invited to speak about my experiences of being a new student researcher at the First Annual ESCalate conference in Birmingham. This was a great opportunity, not only for myself in presenting at the conference, but also in that a number of students and representatives from the Faculty of Education made the trip from Glasgow to Birmingham. The conference allowed us to network with other academics and researchers and to share our experiences to date. I would say that this has been a worthwhile addition to being involved with ESCalate – getting to know other people and their work. After completing my grant-funded project a few people (parents and



academics) contacted me about my work and told me why they found it interesting. From a personal perspective I feel that the whole process and ideology behind ESCalate is significant. I think that it's encouraging to know that there is a team dedicated to supporting new researchers (as well as more experienced) by encouraging people to share their ideas with a wider audience.

Although my postgraduate studies are nearing completion and the final project report completed, I hope to remain involved with ESCalate. The support and encouragement first shown to me by the team almost four years ago has acted as a good introduction to my work in academia.



Angela Jaap
University of
Glasgow

Angela graduated as a music teacher in 2005 and since then she has worked in Secondary Schools throughout Glasgow. At present she is a Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Faculty of Education at the University of Glasgow and is in the process of completing her PhD which looks at identifying and accommodating gift and talent in the music classroom.

Part of our remit is to work with outside agencies, to help disseminate, support and develop their resources to benefit our community. The following articles are from two such groups

Jill Anderson

writes about what happens when a well-established subject centre supports the work of an interdisciplinary project to achieve remarkable results. ►



New Horizons: ESCalate and the Mental Health in Higher Education project

The observation that *'a small increase in levels of wellbeing can produce a large decrease in mental health problems across people of all ages'* (Foresight, 2008) is embedded in the thinking behind the Government's *New Horizons* policy (DoH, 2009). The links between mental wellbeing and learning are increasingly recognised, with a plethora of reports on the role of schools in supporting pupils' mental health and an interest in the wellbeing – across FE and HE contexts – of both students and lecturers.

The Mental Health in Higher Education project (mhhe) was established in 2003 with the aim of enhancing networking and the sharing of approaches to learning and teaching about mental health across the disciplines in UK higher education. ESCalate became a partner of the project in 2007, joining four other Higher Education Academy Subject Centres: Social Policy and Social Work, Psychology, Health Sciences & Practice and Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine.

What happens when you bring together an established subject centre with a sound grasp of its constituency, and the issues that affect it, and a small interdisciplinary project with a focus on a particular cross-cutting issue? Through its link with ESCalate, mhhe has been able to refine and develop its work in three ways:

Initial Teacher Education.

Workshops on wellbeing and Initial Teacher Education have been run at ESCalate and TEAN conferences, in conjunction with the national CAMHS support service. This has served to raise awareness amongst teacher educators of the range of resources available to support the integration of wellbeing issues within programmes (*Everybody's Business* for example); and amongst policy makers of the context within which Initial Teacher Education is delivered¹.

Student mental health and wellbeing.

The primary focus of mhhe has been on mental health as a content area of curricula. It is through our relationship with ESCalate that we have been able to bring issues around the mental health and wellbeing of students more to centre stage. We supported the ESCalate-themed funding call on wellbeing, and were involved in reviewing applications. Two ESCalate-funded projects have a focus on this area².

Threshold concepts, troublesome knowledge and mental health. The ESCalate-themed funding bid took as one starting point the work by Meyer and Land (2003) on threshold concepts and 'troublesome knowledge'. In parallel, the Mental Health in Higher Education project has been exploring the notion of mental wellbeing as a 'threshold concept', across a range of disciplines in higher education. This was one theme of our recent conference: Living and Learning, Learning and Teaching: mental health in higher education³.

In summary, the partnership between ESCalate and mhhe has functioned to increase the emphasis of the mhhe project on the mental health of children and adolescents (through our exploration of the place given to mental wellbeing in the education of school teachers). It has fed into our growing interest in the mental health of learners and of teachers and how this links with the ways in which mental health is taught. Finally, it has grounded the work of the project more thoroughly in recent bodies of thinking within educational research. We have been extremely grateful for the support of ESCalate and look forward to a continued and developing relationship.

¹ www.mhhe.heacademy.ac.uk/ite

² www.mhhe.heacademy.ac.uk/studentmentalhealth

³ www.mhhe.heacademy.ac.uk/thresholdconcepts

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Jill Anderson
mhhe,
Lancaster University

Jill Anderson is Senior Project Development Officer of the Mental Health in Higher Education project, based in the Department of Applied Social Science at Lancaster University. She currently teaches mental health on the BA/MA in Social Work and is enrolled in the Doctoral Programme in Educational Research at Lancaster.

Rebecca Turner

explains how the collaboration between ESCalate and the HELP CETL provided invaluable support for scholarly activity amongst staff at the University of Plymouth Colleges. ►

The Freedom to Write

The Higher Education Learning Partnerships (HELP) CETL has been working with University of Plymouth Colleges (UPC) to support the provision of Higher Education (HE) in Further Education (FE) Colleges. My responsibility at the HELP CETL was to provide opportunities for lecturing and support staff from across the UPC network to engage in scholarly activity and research through its reward and recognition strategy, known as the Award Holder Scheme. Personally, I am relatively “new” to education, entering HE in FE following the completion of a PhD in Physical Geography. Therefore whilst I am an experienced researcher, I was, and still am developing as an academic, so this made our collaboration with ESCalate very valuable for me, as well as the HELP CETL and our partner college staff. Our joint work has allowed us to provide further development and dissemination opportunities to the Award Holders that would have otherwise been unavailable.

Working to support HE in FE lecturers to engage in scholarly activity and research for me is a two way exchange; I have assisted them in developing as



ESCalate provided the HELP CETL with the expertise, freedom and confidence to run with an idea.

researchers, and they have enhanced my knowledge in a whole host of areas. Award Holders have successfully presented their research at conferences. However written dissemination, particularly through scholarly articles, was still proving challenging. Although Tony Brown was a member of the HELP CETL Advisory Group, I had not previously worked with ESCalate, and was therefore unsure of where a request for help to support HE in FE practitioners to develop academic writing skills would lead. Fortunately ESCalate were receptive to this idea and the Award Holder Writing Group was created.

Through the Writing Group we built on the existing ethos of dialogue and worked collaboratively to provide a supportive environment for writing - both physically by way of a retreat and metaphorically by forming a group of supportive

colleagues. Over the following 12 months, collectively we went on an exciting and creative journey that resulted in 11 Award Holders writing scholarly narratives which reflected on their experiences of working to provide HE in Further Education colleges and undertaking research. These narratives were collated into a joint HELP CETL/ESCalate publication: *Putting the I into Identity and Other Stories*¹. This publication represented a significant milestone for the Writing Group, the HELP CETL and UPC. For the Award Holders it demonstrated the distance they had travelled in their development and for the HELP CETL/UPC it showcased the commitment of UPC staff to teaching and learning.

ESCalate provided the HELP CETL with the expertise, freedom and confidence to run with an idea. However, this collaboration did not end with printing the publication: ESCalate, the HELP CETL and Award Holders have continued to share their experience with others in the HE community. In supporting the Writing Group ESCalate provided the HELP CETL and the Award Holders with a national platform to disseminate their work and the expertise to explore a new area of activity. Although the HELP CETL ends in July, the activity that it has supported is continuing within UPC and its partner college network.

¹ <http://escalate.ac.uk/6105>



Our First 10 years



Rebecca Turner
HELP CETL,
University of
Plymouth

Rebecca Turner is currently an Educational Researcher and Developer at the HELP CETL at the University of Plymouth. Whilst working at the CETL Rebecca has supported scholarly activity and research across the University of Plymouth Partner College network, and has also been undertaking similar work for the Academy's HE in FE Enhancement Programme. Recently she has been researching the impact of the expansion of HE in FE on lecturing.



in Conversation with...
 Rosemary Deem
 and Julie Anderson



Rosemary Deem is currently Dean of History and Social Sciences at Royal Holloway, University of London, Visiting Professor of Education at Bristol University and Visiting Professor of Management at Leicester University. Until January 2009 she was Professor of Education and Research Director for Faculty of Social Sciences and Law at the University of Bristol. An Academician of the UK Academy of Social Sciences, Rosemary is a sociologist who has worked at Loughborough, York, the Open and Lancaster Universities and the former North Staffordshire Polytechnic. She was director of ESCalate from 2001-2004.

Julie Anderson is Senior Lecturer at the University of Plymouth, Faculty of Education, working primarily on their International Masters Programme (IMP). She is a visiting fellow at the GSoE, University of Bristol and one of two Associate Directors with ESCalate. She worked as researcher and then manager of ESCalate. Immediately preceding her appointment to Plymouth in January 2010, she worked for fifteen months on secondment from ESCalate to the Higher Education Academy York office with the Director of Networks, David Sadler.

1) How/why did you first get involved with ESCalate?

Rosemary Deem: I joined the University of Bristol in January 2001 from Lancaster University and soon began talking to the then ESCalate manager Arlene Gilpin about the Centre's activities. At Lancaster I had been heavily involved in developing the institution's Teaching and Learning Strategy and had been founding Director of the University Graduate School as well as a member of the Executive of the UK Council for Graduate Education. When the Director of ESCalate, Professor Roger Murphy of Nottingham University, decided to step down I was encouraged by the Graduate School of Education to stand for the directorship. I took over in 2001, combining this role with that of Director of Teaching and Learning for the Graduate School of Education at Bristol and also continued to do research, teach and supervise research students.

Julie Anderson: After working in schools, in business and nearing completion of a PhD, in 2002 I applied for an advertised researcher post with the University of Bristol, Graduate School of Education where ESCalate is based. ESCalate, like all 24 Subject centres, was relatively new – just a couple of years old – and so it was an exciting chance to get involved with something very different within higher education.

2) Which of ESCalate's achievements were you most proud of during your time in post?

RD: We established a range of activities and resources stretching from those teaching students studying for higher education qualifications in further education through to supervisors of doctoral students and also undertook a project about education academics' understanding of education policy across the four UK countries and how this shaped their practice as educators. We also found ways to involve academics who were highly research

active in ESCalate's events – a group who are often quite resistant to being involved in anything concerning teaching, learning and assessment.

JA: A recent external evaluation of the centre undertaken through talking with ESCalate contacts, project holders and attendees at our many events etc., resulted in a report that outlined that ESCalate has achieved much that has been welcomed by the education community UK wide.

A substantial part of my post for many years was running the ESCalate funding of projects. This work involved supporting and advising potential bidders from all over the UK – as well as being part of the decision-making process relating to who was finally offered funding. Interest in the funding meant that this inevitably involved very difficult choices, with ESCalate always looking to try to predict where funding would make most impact in the sector and be best value for money. It was particularly good therefore to hear, via the above evaluation, that this work had attracted some very positive feedback, especially since it was one of the things I was most pleased to have been part of.

3) What did you find most challenging about your role?

RD: Firstly reaching academics who because they worked in education departments felt they had nothing new to learn about teaching, learning and assessment in higher education; holding events in England which were not London based – we held successful events in a number of locations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland but regional events in England did not succeed; also having an ESCalate partner HE site whose managers saw ESCalate not as something valuable and interesting in its own right but as a source of extra income. In time we ended the relationship with this partner site and found a new and more enthusiastic partner site, though some important work was done by members of staff at the original partner site.

JA: Giving feedback to unsuccessful applicants was one the most challenging parts of the job. I always tried to telephone people to inform them in person. Almost without exception, these conversations with colleagues were gracious and feedback (taken from the evaluation comments received for each bid) was welcomed. On occasions these conversations led to unsuccessful applicants working with ESCalate in other ways and many said that it helped them develop and expand their ideas further. It was seldom pleasant being the bearer of bad news.

One who was less than happy not to be offered funding did a *Do you know who I am?* which was a bit intimidating at the time! Although he was a professor, it had been judged that his project lacked the sort of innovative, cutting edge or novel approach that would offer something particularly useful to the education community, and is one of the strengths of ESCalate. It rates the what, not the "who"! Some of the most valuable ideas ESCalate has supported have been with people just starting out in their academic careers and as yet with no academic reputation. No old school tie for us!

4) You have been involved in a number of exciting projects over the years – what is your current area of academic or professional interest?

RD: I don't have a lot of time for research in my present management position at Royal Holloway but have continued to maintain an interest in how leaders of public service organisations interpret their role as change agents and prepare themselves and emerging leaders for their work. This was facilitated by being a co-investigator on a 2006-9 UK Economic and Social Research Council project led by Mike Wallace from Cardiff Business School which compared change agency and the perceived effects of national leadership

development body provision in hospitals, secondary schools, primary care trusts and universities in England. I am also fascinated by the rise and obsession of many universities with national and international league tables.

JA: I have just started a new study to explore the learning styles of education colleagues working in HE. The findings should be pertinent for students wanting to extend their own learning – and for the lecturers who want to support them. The work will focus in particular on how colleagues have overcome barriers or other potential limits to learning. This work is still in its infancy and I would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in talking about their own learning and how it has changed. I can be contacted initially on Julie.anderson@plymouth.ac.uk

5) What do you foresee as being the greatest challenge that ESCalate will have to face in the coming years?

RD: Funding is likely to be the major challenge as higher education along with other publicly funded services begin to face large cuts. Some politicians will see the Subject Centres as an easy target for funding reductions or closure.

JA: As in every area of life today, HE is facing considerable cut backs in funding and the Higher Education Academy Subject Centres are no exception. ESCalate will be called on to maintain and develop the best of what it does with what in real terms is likely to be considerably fewer resources. I would hope however that this may provide further opportunities for others outside the core ESCalate team at Bristol to perhaps offer venues, ideas, workshops etc and so help support the work which seems to be so useful to many in the sector.

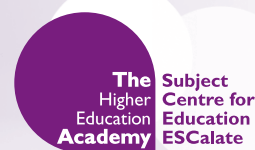
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- New Technology
- Education for Sustainable Development
- Accreditation
- New ways of looking at assessment and feedback
- Student engagement

If you would like to submit a bid go to <http://escalate.ac.uk/hottopics> and read the bids that have been successful and find out how to apply



events

Forthcoming events

Date(s)	Details	Venue
30 June-2 July 2010	 FACE 'Which way now to widen participation? Lifelong learning, Economy & Society' The aim of the conference is to provide a forum for researchers and practitioners to share good practice in access and continuing education. Keynote speakers will provide an insight into the challenging policy agenda ahead and some inspiration drawing on their own experiences and expertise.	Southampton Solent University Conference Centre
9 July 2010	 Technology for Learning: developing the teachers A joint ESCalate, JISC RSC Northern and Success North event at Newcastle College Teaching Development Centre.	Newcastle College Teaching Development Centre
15 July 2010	 UK ITE Network for Education Sustainable Development/ Global Citizenship Third Annual Conference Education of Hope: the impact of ESD/GC on the well being of teachers and young people	London South Bank University

For more details and to book for these and other events, which ESCalate advertises, go to: www.escalate.ac.uk/events/future

