Learning from Internal Change Academy processes

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What were the adaptations?

ESDU were very concerned to keep the integrity of the DISS course in order to maintain its SEDA accreditation and enable participants to obtain a recognised qualification and certification. Happily, the 'outcomes' and 'values' of SEDA underpinned the activities and intentions of both careers and library work, so it was less a matter of 'redesigning' and more 'slanting' some of the flexible aspects of the content and self-directed work to better suit the new client group. Previously DISS had been delivered to staff working directly with students, but now many participants would be supporting academic staff to enable them to better support students. As a result the input was tweaked to facilitate the group looking more in depth at how they provided support, particularly in designing aspects of the curriculum; for example, how to embed employability and information literacy. Reflection on one's own and others' learning was focused within this framework and a leap made to how this would impact on student learning strategies. Surprisingly, very little of the content was changed. The assessment was not affected but rather enhanced by the toolkit providing modules/outcomes that could be embedded in any programme.

The outcomes

Almost everyone who participated in that first adapted course in 2007 has submitted and passed and received their SEDA certificate. Better than that are the contacts, resources and opportunities that participants have made as a result of the course:

- At the third workshop one senior faculty librarian was talking about difficulties she was having with an academic course that was part of her caseload. Before the next workshop she met with the course director and generated changes to the induction programme, course content – including delivery of aspects of information literacy herself – and resources accessed by students. Subsequently she also managed to change assessment criteria on the course to include aspects of information literacy.
- A website designed by two librarians for the use of staff and students in one faculty has been recommended to all academic staff across the whole university as part of a redesign of all modules.
- A careers adviser worked with a senior lecturer to develop an adaptation of the TV programme 'Dragons Den' for nursing students; this has led to them winning the Institute of Careers Guidance (ICG) National Careers Award 2008 in the category 'Working with students in post-19 learning'.
- Job titles for some librarians have changed to include 'learning and teaching'.
- The first author of this paper was offered a job in ESDU on the strength of her engagement with academic staff and commitment to working within the curriculum to embed her particular subject specialisms – employability, personal development planning and employer engagement.

Where next?

The restructuring of the university included changes in many central departments as well as faculties so there is a new cohort for the Educational Staff Development Unit to approach in the renamed central services of 'Library and Learning Resources' and 'Advice and Guidance'.

References

Resources for Academic Staff: www.bcu.ac.uk/studentservices/careers/staffinfo.html

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Learning from Internal Change Academy Processes

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Introduction

A 2007/8 Research and Development Grant from SEDA under its Supporting and Leading Educational Change programme provided Sheffield Hallam University with the opportunity to undertake an extremely interesting and timely piece of work on learning from Internal Change Academy processes. A presentation to the SEDA Spring Conference 2009 focused on understanding the value of Internal Change Academies as a model for leading educational change and demonstrated how a simple benchmarking exercise may provide a rich source of data in leading change processes. This article focuses on the broader lessons learnt about change rather than on the practicalities and the different models of running an Internal Change Academy. That information is available in the project final report (Flint and Oxley, 2009).

Why this project?

Internal Change Academies (ICAs) or Change Academy methodologies are becoming more popular in universities to build capacity for and understanding of how educational change is led and supported. The starting point for many institutions, Sheffield Hallam included, was participation in the national Change Academy programme jointly run by the Higher Education Academy (HEA)

and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) which began in 2004 (further information, resources and a list of participating institutions is available at the HEA Change Academy web site http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ ourwork/institutions/change).

> 'Change Academy is a year-long programme of support for teams from higher education institutions that enables them to develop the knowledge, capacity and enthusiasm for achieving complex institutional change. It provides unique opportunities for team-based learning and professional development that focus on the strategic interests and needs of the participating institutions.'
> (HEA, 2009)

As a result of the attendance of a group of staff at a national Change Academy event held in 2006, coupled with Sheffield Hallam's strong commitment to professional development, the University ran its first ICA (called Shared Futures) in 2007, and is now planning the third iteration of this year-long ICA process (Flint, Oxley and Hynes, 2008). The aim of the current project – to find out why people had decided to run their own programmes and in so doing, what they had learnt about leading educational change processes – was inspired by a Leadership Foundation for Higher Education article (Gentle, 2007) which identified other institutions that had developed their own ICAs.

What this project involved
The focus of the project is how models of educational change within learning, teaching and assessment impact on student and staff learning. The project had three main elements:
Firstly we completed a benchmarking exercise involving face-to-face interviews with the six institutions (other than Sheffield Hallam) in England and Wales which had run ICAs or used Change Academy methodologies. Benchmarking was based on self-evaluation to provide a better understanding of practice and process and generate insights into how improvements and innovations might be made. The questions focused on the strategic approaches and how

specific activities aligned with broader institutional approaches to leading change and educational development. Secondly, Sheffield Hallam organised an event in January 2009 to facilitate sharing and future collaboration between the institutions involved in the benchmarking exercise. We also invited the HEA, the LFHE, and representatives from over 20 institutions who had participated in the national Change Academy or were considering running their own ICA. Finally, we compiled an annotated bibliography (Flint and Oxley, 2009) focusing on contemporary approaches to leading educational change within learning, teaching and assessment, which includes presentations made by the HEA and LFHE at the January event.

So why run an Internal Change Academy?
The benchmarking process suggests that the reasons for engaging with the change academy approach and methodologies are broadly similar for all institutions involved. All had sent teams to the national Change Academy at least once and this positive experience had been instrumental in

the decision to run their own ICA. All staff leading on, or responsible for, their internal academies had attended the HEA programme and interviewees said they felt energised and motivated to adapt the model internally to enable change projects and larger initiatives to move forward.

Experience shows that ICAs are a long term change process, rather than a set of outcomes. Counter to the tendency for staff to focus on the residential aspect of their ICA, it is important to remember that from the outset all the other activities such as pre-meetings, workshops, team leader group meetings and online support environments are a significant part of the process. Professional development is very much at the heart of this whole process. This was often quoted as participants' motivation to engage, combined with the value of some protected time to work on their change projects. The provision of quality venues for the residents and other activities coupled with some in-built social time also fostered a positive sense of reward and of being valued.

The sense of ICAs feeling somehow different was also important in

Figure 1. A slide from a digital slide show produced for the Learning from Internal Change Academies event in January 2009 (Nancy Margulies (http://www. nancymargulies.com) and the World Café (http://www.theworldcafe.com))

determining levels of participation. Stories were told of staff leaving their comfort zone in order to join in with activities. Participants readily viewed their work from different, less familiar perspectives and engaged in higher levels of risk-taking than they would normally. We felt this was a really important aspect of ICAs.

Approaches to Leading Educational Change

Most of the institutional representatives interviewed confirmed that using Change Academy methodologies was very much about encouraging enthusiasm for, and enhancing understanding and ownership of, change as a process. A key consideration was to create a cadre of change agents within the different universities to build cross-institutional working relationships and to break down barriers to change.

Unsurprisingly, there were various approaches to leading change in ICAs, which aligned with existing institutional approaches to leading change. However, the common characteristic of the approaches

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used in ICAs (often drawing from the scholarship underpinning the HEA Change Academy) was the focus on collaborative and participatory techniques. Change was typically viewed through the lens of complexity theory and many of the tools and techniques emphasised the role of cross-institutional conversations and collaboration in bringing about real transformational change. For example, many institutions used World Café and Appreciative Inquiry to facilitate new kinds of conversations about change.

This emphasis on cultural change, where all participants are seen as potential change agents, made the ICA activities feel very different to more traditional, mainstream and formally structured approaches to change, where the ability to lead change is often seen as a function of hierarchical management position. A number of institutions remarked that the collaborative and interactive nature of the ICAs marked a departure from change processes led by senior colleagues. A distinct contrast was apparent between the approaches to change within the ICA activities and other institutional change initiatives.

This dissonance in approaches was also reflected within some ICAs, where highly interactive and participatory activities focused on generating dialogue accompanied more traditional project management techniques. Perhaps this reflects in some way the desire to align ICAs with the institutional culture, while still retaining elements of its innovative essence and the influence of different disciplines and theoretical underpinnings.

Alignment between ICA and institutional approach to change was often related to the institutional drivers for change. Drivers were either formal; for example, theming the ICAs around institutional strategies or priorities such as Learning, Teaching and Assessment, e-Learning, the First Year Student Experience; or less formal, for example, just having a desire for change that enabled something new to emerge. In most cases timeliness was key.

Impacts of Internal Change Academies

Our findings suggest that the ICA activities had not only facilitated a shift in participants' perceptions of approaches to change, but in some cases they had also encouraged more critical and explicit discussion of approaches to change across the institution. For example, one institution described the ICA approach as offering a vital opportunity for staff to view institutional change as emergent, messy and unfinished and that the momentum generated had fed forward into re-structuring and overarching change processes. The view that transformational change was within the control of individuals had impact on networks of colleagues and students beyond those directly involved at events and in project teams. In many institutions the cross-institutional nature of the process was unprecedented (particularly in bridging the divide between administrative and support staff and academic staff) and resulted in improved long-term working relationships and a more collaborative approach to other areas of development. None of the approaches to change in the institutions had remained static – there was a real sense that the ICA activities needed to be dynamic and revisited to ensure that the approach remains fresh and appropriate. The challenge for the future of ICAs is to adapt and maintain this innovative approach within a changing institutional culture, and to continue to build upon evidence that this process represents real value in return for institutional investment in providing professional development and support for change across institutions.

Looking to the future

Comments made at the SEDA conference and at our previous event in January indicate a substantial interest in Internal Change Academies and the use of change academy methodologies. For example, one institution is now going to consider using the approach to support culture change, professional development and strategic developments such as their

News from SEDA

Forthcoming events

- **Workshop: Embedding CPD in Higher Education**
  7th October 2009, London

- **Workshop: Personal Tutoring in Higher Education – Where Now and Where Next?**
  26th October 2009, London

- **14th Annual SEDA Conference 2009: Changing Educational Development: New Ideas, New Approaches, New Contexts**
  17th-18th November 2009, Aston Business School Conference Centre, Birmingham
  (REGISTRATION NOW OPEN)

- **SEDA Spring Teaching Learning and Assessment Conference 2010: Communities of Learning**
  Thursday 6th and Friday 7th May 2010, Park Plaza Hotel, Leeds

- **International Consortium for Educational Development Conference**
  28th-30th June 2010, Barcelona, Spain
  Call for proposals coming soon.
  www.iced2010.org

SEDA Website http://www.seda.ac.uk

As many of you will have seen, SEDA recently launched its new website. We would welcome your feedback on the new site and hope that you find it easy and enjoyable to use.

Professional Development Framework (SEDA-PDF)

SEDA is very pleased to welcome both Anglia Ruskin University and Roehampton University to the list of recognised providers of SEDA-PDF.

Latest passes in Leading Educational Change (Professional Qualification Course)

- Barbara Newland, Bournemouth University
- Elaine Fisher, University of Bath
- Karen Fraser, University of Ulster

Latest passes in Supporting Educational Change (Professional Qualification Course)

- Claire Taylor, Bishop Grosseteste College, Lincoln
- Susan Wilkinson, University of Portsmouth

Congratulations to all five!

New Publication

SEDA Paper 124:
Beyond the Peer Observation of Teaching
Edited by David Gosling and Kristine Mason O'Connor

Download an order form from
http://www.seda.ac.uk/publications.htm

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. Another has successfully bid to participate in the national Change Academy with a view to developing their own ICA in the future.

A positive outcome of this project has been the widespread expression of interest by other institutions in being part of a peer network around the use of Internal Change Academies (and the approaches within them). When we spoke to people about what they wanted from this network the overall response was to have some high quality sessions on aspects of working with change, and plenty of opportunity to share practice, ideas and resources. To facilitate this Sheffield Hallam University is developing an Internal Change Academy Network (ICAN). If you would like to be part of this network please e-mail a.l.flint@shu.ac.uk.

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