Capturing Bigfoot:

The search for good practice in learning and teaching in one specific higher education institution in England.

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Contents

Table of Figures.

Tables.

Thanks.

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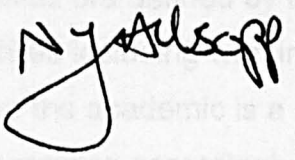

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Abstract.

This thesis considers the issue of good practice in learning and teaching within one higher education institution in England and links it to the development of academic professional identity. The research examines the extent to which it is possible to identify such practice and whether this has implications for the importance of the subject, the notion of academic identity or the professionalism of the academic.

The thesis suggests a model for the way in which an academic's professional identity, comprising both research and teaching, develops. The relationship between academics and Quality Assurance systems is considered, raising issues around pedagogic practices within academic disciplines and the notion of communities of practice.

The changing nature of academic work in higher education, including the development of "Quality" systems as responses to policy initiatives (especially the move from Assurance towards Enhancement), are discussed in relation to their impact upon academic identity.

The thesis considers the methods used to conduct the primary research and the ontological issues surrounding the choice of research tools. Three key foci are identified from the data: A Staff focus where academics work independently, improving their knowledge and delivery to their students, with potential promotion prospects. A Subject focus where academics' professional identities are defined by their discipline, although some develop multiple identities including working collegially with non-specialists. A Student focus where the academic is a subject advocate and student facilitator, developing their practice accordingly.

Finally the limitations, applications and implications of the primary research are considered. Conclusions surrounding the research and field questions are made, as are connections back into the relevant literature especially the policy drivers behind the rise of the Quality movement, the contested notion of good practice, the changing power relationships within the teaching-research nexus and the challenge to academic identity and allegiance to the subject.

Chapter 1. Introduction

i. What is this project concerned with?

Good practice in learning and teaching is much talked about in all sectors of education but is it mythical? As with Bigfoot (or Sasquatch, together with the Yeti) many people claim to know what it looks like, there seems to be "scientific" evidence that it actually exists; some even claim to have seen it personally but exact descriptions vary and contradict one another. The location seems to matter – Bigfoot is known by many different names in different places although all of these versions share similarities. Despite all of this uncertainty there has grown up an industry involved with this beast, selling all kinds of merchandise to a wider audience. This research project is centred on an attempt to capture and examine the elusive animal that is good practice in learning and teaching and to deal with the myths that surround it.

The primary research that follows is focussed specifically on the notion of good practice in learning and teaching within one higher education institution operating in England and is anchored in the firm belief that there are many examples of good practice in learning and teaching across that institution which others would benefit from knowing about and, where appropriate, adopting. This research will discuss the issues surrounding good practice in learning and teaching, the way they operate within specific subject disciplines and their link to student learning. The aim is to consider the ways in which individual academics do or do not take up and use an example of good practice. By so doing this research will also aim to unpack ideas of academic identity and subject community; it will look at the relationship between the individual and their institution; and more widely it will look at the way ideologically driven educational policy changes press down on the institution and academics within it and in the process perpetuate or extend existing power relationships.

In order to evaluate this belief that examples of good practice in learning and teaching existed; that they could be identified; and that others (including indirectly the students) would benefit from not only knowing they existed but in adopting or adapting them for their own practice, I have spent considerable time in my current post as Quality Improvement Manager using varied forms

of data to identify examples of good practice. This experience has helped form an informal and personal framework that I apply in my work when presented with new data. This is based on an assessment of the quantitative and qualitative data provided, such as degree classification profiles and National Student Survey results and the evaluation of modules by students for example. Once identified, I then speak with the individuals concerned about their work, writing this up as short case studies and then publishing them in hard copy, as Good Practice Guides, and electronically in a dedicated section of our departmental intranet site.

Having conducted an analysis of the impact of this work for the department and the university I have concluded that it is having very little effect upon the student learning experience. Observation of other mechanisms that tried to do a similar thing across the university, such as "show and tell workshops" where colleagues gathered to hear of the work being done by others across their faculty, did have some degree of success in attracting participants but my analysis suggested that although colleagues may have left interested or even enthused about what they had seen and heard, there was very little evidence that they had changed their practice as a direct result. My reflections on this lack of impact suggest that it is not possible to find a direct causal link between seeing or hearing about new ideas and approaches and then adopting them in one's own practice because the reasons for change in human beings is always multi-faceted. However my evidence also suggests that those members of staff who were reflective and were always looking for ways to improve their practice were the ones who had adapted or adopted the examples of good practice they had seen, and it is possible to hypothesise that these were the very people who would have changed anyway. These reflections are grounded in the literature concerned with the way in which academics develop both themselves and their careers. This is discussed in detail in chapter 2 where themes such as learning through communities of practice and the emergence of key discipline-specific pedagogic practices are developed.

The opportunity to undertake research for an Ed. D. presented the chance to reconsider how good practice was being identified and to ask why, once identified, it did not appear to be adopted on any significant scale within the specific higher education institution I work for. However the space created around the research has also enabled me to consider the issue more critically: to consider what the drivers are behind these imperatives to identify and disseminate good practice; to examine how academic communities engage with teaching and how this activity relates to their professional identity; and to review the shifts in the Quality agenda towards enhancement or improvement. Thus the project will now also address good practice not as a given but as a contested notion: in doing so it will also consider the way in which university tutors conceive of themselves and the way that they develop their professional identity, the allegiance they have to their subject and the impact this may have upon their reluctance or enthusiasm for adopting or adapting examples of good practice. This is a fundamental shift and enables this particular research project to become part of wider debates currently underway within the higher education sector. These debates are concerned with understandings of an academic identity and professionalism, approaches to educational change (focussing specifically for example upon quality improvement or enhancement), the notion of Excellence; the power relationships operating within the teaching-research nexus and indeed the changing nature of higher education within England.

ii. My own positionality.

I want to argue that there is a tension between, on the one hand the pressure on social science researchers to seek an objective truth and on the other hand the need for them to foreground an understanding that all interpretation of data, in whatever form, is always seen through the lens of one's own experience. Christians (2005, p.142), echoing Max Weber, argues: "What is really at issue is the intrinsically simple demand that the investigator and the teacher should keep unconditionally separate the establishment of empirical facts...and his own political evaluations."

My own view is very firmly that an understanding of my ontological position will affect my choice of research methodology and thus my research methods. As such I would agree with Christians' argument that whilst "...personal, cultural, moral or political values cannot be eliminated;...what social scientists chose to investigate...they choose on the basis of their values." (p.142)

However this chapter is also a space to articulate but not necessarily resolve a struggle with which I am engaged. Broadly, this is a struggle between on the one hand seeing the making of judgements as a wholly appropriate part of what it is to be a teacher and on the other discovering that which I want to make judgements about to be a wholly contentious and slippery concept which it is therefore not easy to judge and measure.

When considering the motivations behind the choice of this research project I accept that from a functionalist perspective education can be seen as a means of reproducing societal values and preparing the individual to fit within these. However I also believe that education can also be 'emancipatory' in that it is about freeing people and opening up their minds and imaginations so that they can have the power to improve their lives. These views need not be in conflict as Barnett (1992) suggests in his conception of "higher education as a matter of extending life chances" and in the process also "the enhancement of the individual student's personal character" and "developing competence to participate in a critical commentary on the host society" (Barnett, 1992, p.19 - 21). As stated, I believe education enables people to grow personally, to benefit from this growth and contribute to society in ways that are not fixed or predictable. In this way I see education as potentially able to challenge and change society rather than perpetuating any established homogeneity. I would agree with those such as Durkheim (1911, 1925) who argues that part of the function of an education system is to transmit the key cultural values and understandings from one generation to the next, but I would also argue that education should also be about enabling that next generation to question those values and understandings and thus to make them anew for their own context. In this way education is different from 'training', which I see as being about providing employers with a workforce

that is suitably skilled and an individual who has the skills to be employed and thus earn a livelihood. My view of education in general, and higher education - my area of direct and current experience – in particular, is as part of a movement actively promoting a social justice agenda. As such this is bound to affect the ways in which I conceive of "quality" in higher education and of "good practice". The research questions for this work indicate the intention to discover whether others working in the sector share a view of what these terms might look like.

I started my teaching career in 1981, aged 22, teaching English for six years in an 11-18 comprehensive in inner city Derby. I moved into further education in 1988 and during my twelve years there moved from lecturer to head of department and then took on a cross-college role as Head of GCSEs and 'A' Levels. I then moved into my current institution, a relatively large former polytechnic and now a post-1992 university in the Midlands. There are currently five faculties, each with its own executive and committee structures, which mirror and then report up to the university's Academic Board and its sub-committees. This structure accounts for the roles of some of the interviewees, including Dean, Head of Studies and Chair of Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee. There are also a number of relatively small central departments that also feature in this research, including the Academic Professional Development Unit and my own Department of Academic Quality. These departments work together on a range of learning and teaching projects and are often the agents for enacting the decisions taken at university level. In all of its marketing and publicity the university claims to value both research and teaching. The intake has, over the last decade, been mainly from the local area and as such reflects the ethnic make-up of the communities it serves. In very recent times the demand for student places has been greater than places available and as such there are the beginnings of changes in the student body as the institution begins to move from being a "recruiting" university to potentially being a "selecting" university.
My first role in the institution was to take control of the quality and development of their (at that time) sizeable further education provision. Eventually, in 2001, I moved into my present position, a middle management

role working with higher education colleagues to improve the quality of the student learning and teaching experience and (latterly) with responsibility for the newly emerging quality improvement agenda.

From this varied experience I have come to view teaching as a complex, contradictory and messy business, where each day, and sometimes each lesson, seems to have the potential to be different. This is for a range of reasons, some of which are within the control of the teacher but some of which, including environment, a student/pupil's previous experiences and the interplay between all or some of the students/pupils, ~~is~~ are not. As a result it is my view that it is not always possible for the teacher to understand and predict what works in their classroom on all occasions, with whom and why. There are a multitude of factors and isolating any particular one as the key is difficult and probably ultimately frustrating. In stating this I would want to align myself with recent commentators such as Wrigley (2006) and Ball (2008) and to fundamentally disagree with current government diktats to teachers which imply not only that individual lesson plans and whole schemes of work *can* be downloaded from the internet but that they *should be*. A prime example of this was the recently decommissioned Teachernet website (still available via http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/*/http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/) which included a lesson plan database claiming "over 2,000 lesson plans and resources (which) have all been evaluated by teachers, and cover the national curriculum Key Stages 1 to 3." This resource was especially ironic since one of the key Ofsted judgements concerning the effectiveness of a school contained in the Ofsted Framework for the Inspection of Schools (2007, p.21) is "How well do programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners?" In answering this question Inspectors are asked to evaluate: "the extent to which programmes or activities match learners' needs, aspirations and potential, building on prior attainment and experience" and "how far programmes or the curriculum meet external requirements and are responsive to local circumstances". Both of these requirements imply a need to design the curriculum for the pupils/students one has in front of you rather than a downloadable set of resources which are by definition bound to be unspecific.

On reflection, what is interesting about my way of considering teaching is that it seems at odds with the drive to measure, to be innovative and to be "good", key factors that drive much of the quality agenda I currently deal with and work to implement. I have no answer for this contradiction but I do argue that understanding the "messiness" of education enables me to work more sympathetically and humanely with colleagues. I wish to develop this notion later in this chapter.

iii. A view of education formed by experience.

My experience as a teacher in three sectors of education, as a member of the middle management of a further education college and working alongside colleagues across my current institution has convinced me of each teacher's ability to reflect upon their own performance and of the need for that reflexivity. Indeed I would want to argue that not only is it a function of the role of a teacher to *try* to continuously improve – because each day, class or academic year is, as I have suggested, different – but almost all of the teachers I have worked with have *wanted* to improve their performance and thus that of their pupils or students. Thus the imperative to continuously improve is also the drive to survive. It is not a drive derived from the fear of redundancy or even of boredom, it is more the drive to do what is necessary to help pupils or students achieve. This is often called professionalism and this similarly contentious notion is discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

My own personal experience of working in schools, colleges and higher education has led me to believe that teaching may contain at least a little bit of "magic" – by which I mean the exercising of a personal chemistry based upon individual relationships between teacher and pupils – but it is also, at least in part, a set of skills that can be learnt and thus also a series of practices that can be changed and adapted so that they lead to improvements. However this is not to suggest that there is a formulaic response that anyone can apply in order to achieve success or that the skills and practices will be the same in every subject discipline (as is discussed in chapter 2); I therefore reject the

Teachernet method described above. Instead for me successful teaching and learning is the marrying together of the personal and the learnt, which creates the relationship with pupils or students and thus leads to successful teaching and to the appearance of the elements of "magic".

I also believe, like Wrigley that this skills set and the personal chemistry between tutors and students is under threat from the increasing threat or imposition of the performativity agenda:

> The English education system is obsessive about testing... The problem is not only the expense and the number of tests pupils sit, but the insidious ways that test preparation and a testing mindset have come to dominate teaching and learning. It pervades the entire life of schools and is deeply corrosive of real learning. (Wrigley 2006, p.16)

For this mindset to be at least sidelined, if not overturned, I believe teachers need to embrace the idea that improving one's own performance and thereby the achievement of one's students is an integral part of what it is to be a teacher. For this to occur I believe that teaching staff need to be able and willing to see the generic nature of the work which lies below the subject discipline. This is easier for some sectors of education than it is for others. There may be many reasons for this but my own view is that the dominant status of the subject in some sectors of the education system is at least part of the issue. By this I mean that in all but the primary sector teachers specialise almost solely in one area of the curriculum. For example as part of the recruitment process graduates who want to teach in primary schools do not need to have studied a national curriculum subject as part of their degree whereas those wishing to teach in secondary schools do. (See TDA criteria for admission onto a PGCE course at www.tda.gov.uk) This is because primary school teachers have to deliver all aspects of the national curriculum as part of their working lives whereas those in secondary schools generally teach their subject – at least to start with. This latter model is also followed by the post-16 sector, perhaps reaching its apotheosis in the higher education sector.

By contrast, within schools and colleges there is often a drive by the management of the institution to decide upon a common approach to specific aspects of the life of the institution that transcend the subject specific. For

example both primary and secondary schools engage in staff development focused on teaching and learning, more often than not organised and facilitated at an institutional level. In larger institutions there is also often a member of the senior management team with responsibility for teaching and learning across the school. This suggests to me a view that there are significant parts of the consideration of teaching and learning which are of common interest to all staff and all subjects. However this is not to suggest that it is effective for any single approach to be imposed upon every member of staff. I would argue that the adoption of whole school approaches to say, assessment or personal tutoring only work when they are able to be contextualised for the individual subject and the pupils or students within it. It is this difficult balance between individuality and uniformity which this research hopes to unpack through its attempt to identify definitions and examples of good practice in learning and teaching and to discover any agreements or links between those interviewed and the subject disciplines they see as their own.

The situation in higher education is not exactly the same: here the subject discipline is all-powerful. Whilst a university such as my own, might have a common assessment policy and a common set of marking criteria for those working with its undergraduates, it is considered legitimate, even desirable, for each subject discipline to contextualise these for themselves. This enables the institution to claim equitability of the student experience whilst at the same time allowing subject disciplines the flexibility to cast the world in its own image – a tacit acknowledgement of the power of the subject. Whilst this is understandable, in many respects it can mean that individual subject disciplines tend to work in isolation, and this can be counter productive especially in terms of teaching and learning. I would want to argue that if teaching staff in higher education are able to balance the predominance of their subject's own ways of doing things with a willingness to accept the notion that there is much that is shared by all subjects with regard to pedagogy then they are also more likely to be able to learn from one another. This is unpacked further in chapter 2 and later in the discussion of the move by the

QAA towards notions of quality enhancement discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis.

I am aware that this position does not sit comfortably within the context of higher education where the lecturer is appointed initially for their specific subject knowledge, rather than their ability to communicate this knowledge and to enthuse their students. I am also aware that my work within my own institution has led me to see the student learning experience as being disadvantaged if the lecturing staff do not have the skills and techniques to teach the students they have in front of them rather than the students they wished they had in front of them. Research by Avis et al (2003, p.179) found that although teaching was characterised by "the pervasiveness of managerialism" – by which I take him to mean the alleged burgeoning of bureaucracy leading to an approach to teaching which becomes concerned with quantifiable outcomes designed for and by the Techocrats in a non-teaching role within and outside of our universities. This seems to add little to the teaching and learning process. However Avis et al's (2003, p.189) research also showed that despite this, those involved in teaching also had expectations of what a "good learner" is: "I think one of my expectations is that the students that I would be given are students who would want to learn and want to be there."

I believe that there could equally be said to be an expectation of what a "good teacher" is in higher education. From my experience, if academic staff (and the subject communities they belong to) were to place an equal value on being seen as teachers of a subject and an expert in that subject then the experience for the student in the classroom would be greatly improved. This is not to claim that the discipline has no bearing on HE teaching but it is to claim that in terms of teaching there is more that is similar between the various subject disciplines than there is that is different. It is also my claim that this is often argued against by academics who do not venture outside of their discipline, with the result that across my own institution for example there are numerous instances of different subject teams developing the same (or even inferior) approaches to a teaching and learning situation and there is little

appetite to discover this fact or to take advantage of it. This, I would argue, is ultimately to the detriment of the students.

Throughout my teaching career I have been aware of the pressure put upon tutors in all sectors of education to perform and to hit targets. This pressure has undoubtedly increased over, the last two decades or so, and can perhaps be traced back to the 1992 Education Act that brought university status to former polytechnics and independence from local authorities for the post-compulsory sector. At the same time this pressure has become normalised into all sectors of the teaching profession such that entrants into teaching over the last five years will know of no other way of operating and as such may be unaware of this very considerable change in the way that teaching is perceived both within and outside the profession. Wrigley (2006, p.27) sees this as a "reshaping" of teaching "on the basis of limited evidence", a move which he describes as "corrosive", part of "the surveillance regime" and which "affects teachers' motivation and relationships with learners and produces lasting damage to schools as caring communities". The reasons for and consequences of this reshaping are discussed in Chapter 3.

Having been a part-time Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) Inspector myself I am conscious of the pressures heaped upon an individual teacher by being inspected and observed. I am aware that however much an inspector might attempt to make a classroom observation at least in part a humane staff development exercise, in the final event the inspection regime requires that there is a judgement made and that judgement has an effect upon the individual being observed.
Thus as an example of Dickson and Roethlisberger's (1966) "Hawthorne effect" this pressure before, during and after an observation – especially by an Inspector - may prove to be beneficial to the students in the short run, but may in reality be seen as perhaps closer to the concept in quantum mechanics known as the observer effect or more properly Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, where one may suggest that being observed will have an effect upon the individual being observed but one cannot predict with any confidence that it will be a positive effect for any of the people involved.

I agree with Stephen Ball (2003, 2008) that performativity is now all encompassing within the school and college sectors and that staff and institutions are under considerable pressure to produce results. Serving teachers might argue that this pressure is coming from many sources: school or college management, central government agencies, parents, students, even business. I also agree with Ball that this drive to improve has been altered from what might have been seen as a humanistic desire to enable each pupil to achieve their own potential into what is often considered to be a method of maintaining or increasing an institution's position in the various league tables: tables that are created from the results of annual testing. This change has at its heart a very different intention, what Ball (2008, p.49) sees as "a culture or a system of 'terror'" where

> The performances of individual subjects or organisations serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of 'quality'...(and) encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organisation...

I also acknowledge that this way of judging the work of a teacher has become part of the higher education landscape in recent years and I am thus also aware of the delicious irony that my current role within my university is directly associated with the maintenance of standards and the quality of provision so as to maintain the reputation of the institution. I am the Quality Improvement Manager within a large post-1992 university that is constantly attempting to maintain the balance between research and teaching. I work within a quality assurance orientated central unit and a university system that is concerned with issues of accountability. Since the vast majority of the institution's funding comes directly from HEFCE-funded undergraduates there is an especial interest paid to the requirements of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and as such considerable energy is spent ensuring that quality assurance mechanisms are robust and ready for scrutiny.

This is not to imply that within my institution there is a simplistic audit culture, indeed there has been an institutional commitment to "continuous improvement" written into these systems for some time. This has been augmented recently by a drive to deregulate and avoid duplication whilst at the same time turning the university's systems towards the improvement of

quality, based upon an assumption that the appropriate levels of quality can already be assured. Such a move is an attempt to balance the need to provide measures of performance of the kind that Ball discusses with the mandate for individual teachers to improve and to seek help so to do. This is an approach that I can sympathise with, even if it is not fully understood, appreciated or implemented in this way.

The advantage of my institution's approach is that there is always an external impetus to demonstrate that improving the quality of the student learning experience is a priority for all of the members of the university community. However this is often seen by our academic community as a stick with which to beat them without very much evidence of the proverbial carrot being present. This can lead to participation and cooperation which is begrudgingly given rather than being the result of presenting a logical argument and winning a rational debate. There is thus much compulsion and little volunteering; a situation which I suspect exists across most higher education institutions, indeed across most education institutions in whatever sector – it might even be the case that this is true for most workplaces across most of the country. The difference for me in my role is that I seek to persuade rather than compel because I see value in using and adapting existing quality systems to try to improve the student learning experience and thereby furthering the emancipatory role of education described previously.

My motivation in undertaking this particular research project is in the main to improve the learning experience for the students at my university. This is combined with an unspoken hope, even expectation, from the institution that this research will provide a tangible product or conclusions that will enable the institution to improve the quality of its provision.

iv. Practical changes to the scope of the project.

As stated previously, it was my original intention to use this research to consider the issue of good practice within my institution. However this project

was never intended as just a theoretical exercise; behind the general aim is a desire to improve the student learning experience of the students in my institution, particularly the undergraduate students, where most of my contact and interest lies. In this I am acutely conscious of the warning that Peim (2009, p.236) provides when discussing what he terms a "crisis in educational research", that there is an

> ...essential distinction to be made...between high quality, well-designed, relevant and purposeful educational research as against poor quality, directionless and pointless 'non-research'. These self-appointed in-house arbiters of excellence declare that, in fact, most educational research is both poor and pointless.

This project was therefore always designed to be of both academic interest but also crucially of practical significance to real students in a specific higher education institution.

I am aware that limiting my research focus to my own institution might mean that the conclusions that I am able to draw are limited in nature and as a result I originally intended to try to compare the findings from within my own institution with findings from at least some of the rest of the higher education sector, particularly a HEI with a similar student intake and research-teaching balance. This would have allowed me to consider whether the particular circumstances of my own institution were unique or whether more general conclusions could be drawn which would apply to a wider audience and in the process start a bigger debate.

To make the research findings even more credible I also originally intended to compare the higher education sector with the school and post-compulsory sectors where I was aware that different rules applied. In both of these sectors the requirements of the Ofsted inspection regime and the School Improvement drive from the Department for Education (DES, formally the Department for Children, Schools and Families, DCFS and before that the Department for Education and Science, DfES) have meant that there is a much more common approach to the adoption of good practice; indeed I would argue that the Ofsted inspection regime has implicitly *required* that

schools and colleges take up and use identified examples of good practice without any real acknowledgement that the idea of good practice might in itself be contested. This is seen in the way in which inspectors expect schools and colleges to justify why they have *not* adopted specific approaches to teaching and learning, such as Assessment for Learning, and to show that the alternative they have used is better at achieving the required results. The implication here then is that the "approved" examples of good practice work best not for some schools in some contexts but for most schools in most contexts. The purpose of this approach is not made clear in the documentation published by Ofsted but I would argue that it is to establish some degree of parity across the sector, which then allows simple comparisons to be made. This in turn enables the creation of "league tables" and other such mechanisms that label a school's management, staff and pupils. There is little in the responses from staff within schools and colleges, following the receipt of their inspection feedback and reports, that suggests that these terms are in any way challenged, at least officially; however whether they are effective when transferred to another context is a different question.

Finally in my original conception I intended to compare all of the above with another public sector body engaged in the identification and dissemination of good practice with the ultimate aim of benefiting the "end user" - in this case the Health Service. This view is exemplified by Donaldson (2001) where the Chief Medical Officer, speaking at the Royal Society of Medicine in 2001 suggested "Good practice often spreads slowly, like treacle. We need to make it flow like mercury from one part of the NHS to another."
Again I was aware from my work within my own institution that different quality assurance and improvement mechanisms operated here and that there was a much greater willingness to accept and apply examples of good practice. This may be because these examples are claimed to arise from evidence-based practice, for example the clinical procedure seen as the most effective way to take a blood sample.

All of this was too great for the time space and resources I had available to me and so I chose to limit my study and to try for a depth of analysis.
As such I have concentrated solely on my own institution. I have carefully constructed a schedule that has enabled me to interview staff from across the five faculties and have drawn from as wide a range of disciplines as I could in the time that was available to me.

v. The emergence of research questions and field questions to guide the research.

As stated previously I believe that being involved in a quality process in any area of work is about making judgements and finding ways to improve. I would therefore argue that quality assurance and, in my own case, quality improvement, in higher education has to involve making judgements about the quality of learning and teaching and then finding ways to improve it.
I have sympathy with the arguments described in chapter 3 that government education policy is based upon a lack of trust in the professionals working within the sector and is also based upon a Foucauldian need to keep the sector under surveillance in order to change behaviour through the threat or presence of that surveillance. I also have sympathy with the view described in the same chapter that the Ofsted and the QAA were established to undertake that role.

However I also want to argue that the wider culture in which higher education's quality assurance systems operate is also defined by a lack of trust and a concomitant loss of unquestioning respect for those institutions historically seen as having a higher social and cultural status. The advent of Thatcherism and the accountability and consumerist culture has changed the way in which educational professionals have to work. I would agree with the notions described by Nixon et al (2001b) that in order to survive and even flourish, those working in higher education today need to envisage and agree a new definition of professionalism that fits this new context.

One way to achieve this may be through identifying and then disseminating examples of good practice so that peers can learn from one another in a collegial way which bridges boundaries between subject disciplines. However, whilst at a central governmental level there is a commitment to this approach and it is possible to see national agencies such as Ofsted, the QAA and the HEA producing broadly similar ways of judging teaching (see appendix 1), it has also been shown that there is much dispute within the academic community as to whether it is possible to define good practice within subject areas. Furthermore there is dispute as to whether any of those subject-specific judgements can be transferred to other contexts and other subject areas in higher education in order to form a coherent view of what is good practice in learning and teaching for all higher education subjects, their staff and their students. There is then, it appears to me, an impasse.

Therefore my personal hypothesis, born out of my own experiences, is that whilst it *is* possible to identify good practice this may be seen as specific to that subject discipline. I am keen to examine this through my research. However I also believe that because so much of higher education occurs within subject disciplines there is little opportunity or even desire to see and understand what other disciplines are doing and perhaps less opportunity or desire to learn from them. Higher Education is based upon its subject disciplines and is proud of this heritage and I wish to discover whether, in the specific area of identifying and sharing good practice in learning and teaching in higher education, this way of working means opportunities are being missed. Thus I wished to undertake the research to test these ideas in the field and to see if it was possible to uncover generic features of good practice in learning and teaching beneath the subject specific; then to share these with others in different subjects. The reason for trying to identify shared understandings of good practice is not to enforce these across an institution in a way that denies or relegates the subject specific but to find ways of considering good practice in a way which enables colleagues to understand that they (and, by extension, their students) can benefit from the knowledge, experience and expertise of others and that others can benefit from them. In this way approaches to teaching and learning are operating in a similar way to

some research in that they are acknowledging and building upon work undertaken elsewhere. Therefore my first research question for this project is:

1. Is it possible to define the characteristics of, and identify examples of, good practice in learning and teaching within different subject disciplines operating within a post 1992 UK University in order to identify potential similarities and differences between them?

The field questions that flow from this research question and guide the semi-structured interviews in particular were thus:

i. Can academics identify good practice in their own areas? Does this happen?
ii. Once identified is any good practice then disseminated to colleagues within their wider subject discipline?
iii. Do academics think this dissemination has any discernable impact upon student learning?
iv. Is it possible, through an analysis of this subject level approach, to discern any wider agreement of what constitutes good practice across an institution?
v. *If* it does prove possible to discern a wider agreement, is this helpful in improving the learning experience for all students?

These questions assumed that individual academics were part of subject teams and my analysis and interpretation of the interviews showed that there is an underlying theme that emerged almost as an unintentional subtext to the interviews. I did not address this theme directly in the interviews because it was not part of my planning or initial thinking but it came to form a way of capturing and interpreting the way in which my understanding and analysis of the interviews evolved, post hoc. Therefore I developed my second research question in order to have the space to consider this theme in my work:

2. Does the search for such characteristics and examples challenge the primacy of the academic subject discipline, notions of academic identity and conceptions of academic professionalism in higher education?

This in turn has a series of three sub-questions attached, namely:

a. How do the interviewees express their allegiance to their subject discipline?

b. Do academics consciously consider the wider academic and/or institutional community when making decisions about good practice or are they concerned only with their own specific subject discipline?
c. What do academics consider to be the relationship between generic aspects of teaching and discipline or context specific aspects?

The analysis of these research and field questions is developed in chapter 5.

Chapter 2. Developing the professional academic in modern higher education: exploring the connections between discipline-based research and the scholarship of learning and teaching.

i. Introduction.

In a short opinion piece in the journal *Teaching in Higher Education*, Lewis Elton (2000) argues that good teachers "love both their subject and the teaching of it", and that as part of this, they value and respect equally those who research their subject and those who research its pedagogy. In this then lies an argument which joins together the usually separate notions of teaching and research and their associated roles, as well as bringing together the actors known as tutor and student. This chapter aims to: examine the identity and roles of the academic professional in modern higher education and the ways in which academics gain an understanding of the world they have entered; consider the key stages in the development of an academic; discuss the relationships between research and teaching; introduce notions of quality and accountability. Through this discussion the role of the subject discipline will be a key focus since this influences the changing nature of an academic's role throughout their career and the possible tensions that might result from these changes. At a wider level the subject discipline will also be considered in the way that national initiatives are responded to. By taking this focus this chapter helps to prepare the ground for the development of issues around Quality policy discussed in chapter 3 and the findings of the primary research discussed in chapter 4 and 5.

ii. Professional academic identity in higher education.

Perhaps the starting point for this discussion is the conception of identity for academic professionals working in higher education institutions today. This involves two main conceptions: one sees the academic as a researcher and the second sees them as a tutor or teacher. These are not separate identities but are intertwined. The conception of academic as researcher is still the traditional and perhaps predominant way of characterising professional identity and is seen as inextricably linked to the subject discipline. The continued importance of the subject is evidenced through the influence and power of the various research councils and the continued existence of HEA subject centres (despite significant financial pressures and compared to the

demise of the Generic Centre). Kogan (2000) sees academics as belonging to their discipline and their academic identity flourishing from these disciplines. Elsewhere in the same text he goes on to argue that there is a mutual dependence between the institution and the individual academic, with the individual relying on the institution for time, space and resources with which to undertake their work. In turn the institution relies on the individual for its reputation and income. Henkel, (2005, p.173) building on her work some five years earlier, argues that although in recent times the disciplines have come under "severe challenge" they have been strongly defended by their members and remain "a powerful influence in reward systems and in the creation and maintenance of academic agendas. (They remain) a strong source of academic identity in terms of what is important and what gives meaning and self-esteem".

The second way of seeing academic professional identity is as tutor or teacher. This identity is based upon the notion that in order to teach in higher education, as elsewhere, there are two key parties in the educational process, the tutor and the student. Both actors play their parts in this process: tutors expect and are expected to be experts and to teach to that expertise whereas students expect and are expected to learn from them. This conception is itself based around the notion of transmission and reception, which may be more or less active on the part of the receiving student but is always bound up with notions of power and control. As such it does not take account of recent developments by, for example, Neary and Winn (2009) which challenge the reader to consider the student as a co-producer rather than passive consumer of knowledge. In this second understanding it might be argued that the roles of the actors necessarily change significantly so that they challenge the traditional way of constructing the professional identity of the academic and by so doing they also challenge the understanding of what might be considered to be student learning.

This chapter argues that the development of the academic goes through a number of stages and involves, to a greater or lesser degree, the interaction between the two conceptions identified above: researcher and tutor. The diagram below is an attempt to represent that complex interaction; it strives to show the ways in which teaching and research operate both independently

and in a closely connected manner. It illustrates the means by which teaching and research interact, characterised by Henkel (2004, p.20) as a "nexus (...) necessary, integral" and 'functionally interdependent'.

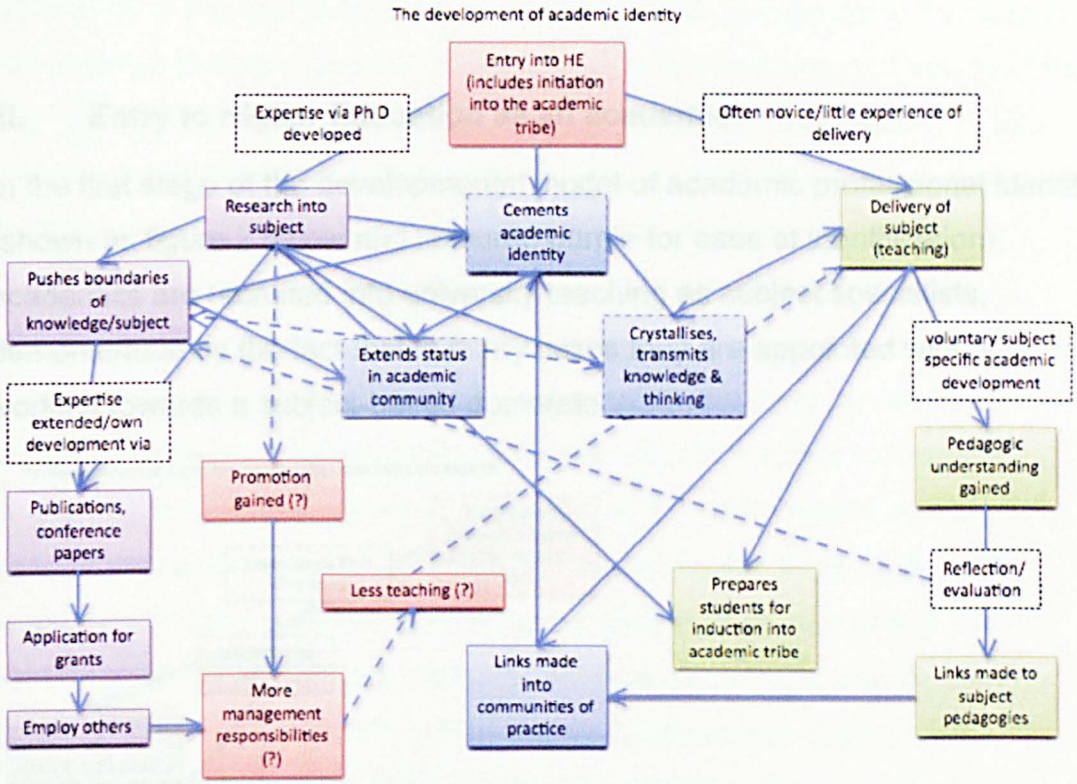


Figure 1. A representation of the interconnected nature of the academic life cycle

The model, which is unpacked and described in detail in the sections that follow, is concerned with the development of academic identity. It is split into two main aspects that overlap and intertwine. The boxes are stages or developments joined by arrows: these are either solid or dotted depending upon how positive or conditional the connection is seen to be. The left hand side of the diagram uses purple boxes and is concerned with the use and effects of academic research whereas the right hand side of the diagram uses green boxes and is concerned with the use and effects of teaching. The blue boxes in the centre illustrate the effects of both research and teaching and the white boxes explain or comment upon the movement from one box to another. The diagram also sees the development of the academic's career as rhythmic in nature rather than linear in that the various connections and separations illustrated in the model will reoccur at numerous stages in their career rather than occurring once as the academic's career trajectory moves on. This

model therefore sees the interaction of research and teaching as providing what might be described as the pulse for the academic's working life, although it is not possible to illustrate this easily in two dimensions.

iii. Entry to Higher Education as an academic

In the first stage of the developmental model of academic professional identity (shown as figure 2 below and coloured purple for ease of identification), academics are recruited into university teaching as subject specialists, demonstrated by the fact that in many cases they are appointed with or working towards a subject-based doctorate.

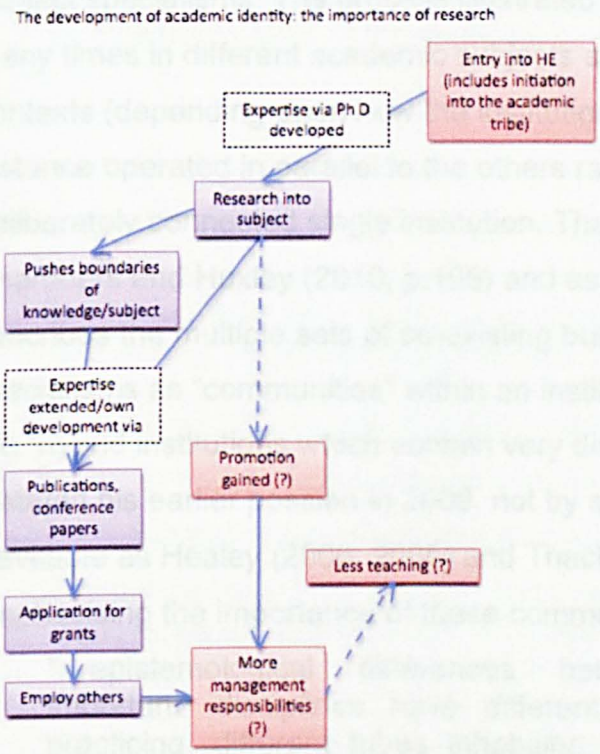


Figure 2. Stage 1 in the interconnected nature of the academic life cycle

This specialism, signified by the award of a doctorate, enables the academic to become part of their subject community, described as the "academic tribe" (Becher and Trowler, 2001, p.23). The tribes are "the distinctive cultures within academic communities" and the cultures are in turn the "sets of taken-for-granted values, attitudes and ways of behaving, which are articulated through and reinforced by recurrent practices among a group of people in a given context."

Entry into the tribe through appointment to an academic position in a university in turn creates and cements the academic's professional identity. This is of crucial importance at the beginning and throughout the professional working life of the academic because it suggests an allegiance to the pursuit of knowledge through research and adherence to the norms and values of the tribe they have joined. Healey (2000, p.173) states this very clearly: "...for most academic staff their primary allegiance is to their subject or profession, and their sense of themselves as staff at a given institution is secondary." Modern higher education institutions comprise a range of different specialisms, each, perpetuating the norms and values of their particular tribe. As such the modern university is characterised by the diversity of these subject specialisms. The process illustrated in figure 1 above is repeated many times in different academic subjects and different organisational contexts (depending upon how the institution structures itself), with each instance operated in parallel to the others rather than as part of any deliberately connected single institution. Thackwray, writing with Blackmore, Chambers and Huxley (2010, p.106) and as single author (2007, p.46) describes the multiple sets of co-existing but mainly separate subject specialisms as "communities" within an institution and argues that universities are "hybrid institutions which contain very diverse communities." Trowler restated his earlier position in 2009, not by seeing these different tribes just as inevitable as Healey (2000, 2005) and Thackwray (2007) seem to but by emphasising the importance of these communities:

> "...epistemological differences between disciplines are important: disciplines have different ways of thinking and practicing, different tribes inhabiting the different disciplinary territories..." (Trowler, 2009, p.181).

He argues that "the stories faculty tell each other...are very significant and help create a kind of reality themselves" such that the tribes are not just a place to meet like-minded colleagues who share Becher and Trowler's "...taken-for-granted values, attitudes and ways of behaving..." but are the location for the creation of world views, which in turn then affect all other actions that follow from those views. Poole (2009, p.50) expresses the same idea using a similar metaphor to Thackwray, seeing the disciplines not as

tribes but as "homes within a larger learning community" which are comforting and secure places that protect the academic and stop them from moving outside into a more uncertain world. Ylijoki (2000) sums up all of these views succinctly:

> "Besides the common cognitive basis, disciplines have their own social and cultural characteristics: norms, values, modes of interaction, lifestyle, pedagogical and ethical codes etc" (Ylijoki, 2000, p.339)

However she goes on to extend this tribal view of academic communities so that they also become the locus for the training of the next generation of initiates, the current student cohort:

> "...the socialisation of students (into their discipline) basically involves a successful commitment to the moral order of the disciplinary culture of the study field..."(Ylijoki, 2000, p.341)

This initiation is not just membership of some kind of club; it is also the way in which understandings and views of the world begin to form and ways of living and working emerge:

> "...the moral order constitutes...what is considered to be good, right, desirable and valued as opposed to what is regarded as bad, wrong, avoidable and despised." (Ylijoki, 2000, p.341)

Henkel (2005, p.156) sees this as the construction of identity "within the context of social institutions and relationships" and the "social process generated within them" and she goes on to state that:

> Disciplines are given tangible form and defined boundaries in the basic units or departments of universities and their role in the shaping and the substance of academic identities is there reinforced.
> Membership of these interconnected communities has enabled academics in the UK to see themselves as belonging to a distinctive and bounded sector of society, the normative power of which has been sustained in part by a nexus of myths, socialisation processes and regulatory practices. (Henkel, 2005, p.158)

These norms and values are demonstrated for example in the choice of research topics and the engagement – or not –with those commissioning and funding research topics, the research methods adopted to undertake any given project, and the ways in which the outcomes are reported and to whom. All of these decisions are, as

Henkel states above, underpinned by sets of values and normative ways of working which the subject discipline has refined over time: members of each academic tribe accept and work within these norms and values as one of the conditions of membership. The norms and values shape the way in which academics perceive ~~of~~ the world, how they behave professionally and conceive of themselves and can thus be seen as forming a "moral order" as Ylijoki suggests.
Thus the rhythm described in figure 1 above is established and one aspect of the academic's professional life begins.

iv. Developing and benefiting from research.

As described above, once they have entered into the world of higher education, and embarked upon developing a career, the academic undertakes research, usually directly connected to their academic discipline and the field of expertise that they used to gain them entry. Not only is this an accepted way of working, it is considered a vital part of cementing academic identity for the individual, as it identifies them publicly with their subject. Research is therefore an activity most academics would seek to carry out, but is also seen as part of their contractual expectations or requirements as described in figure 3 below.

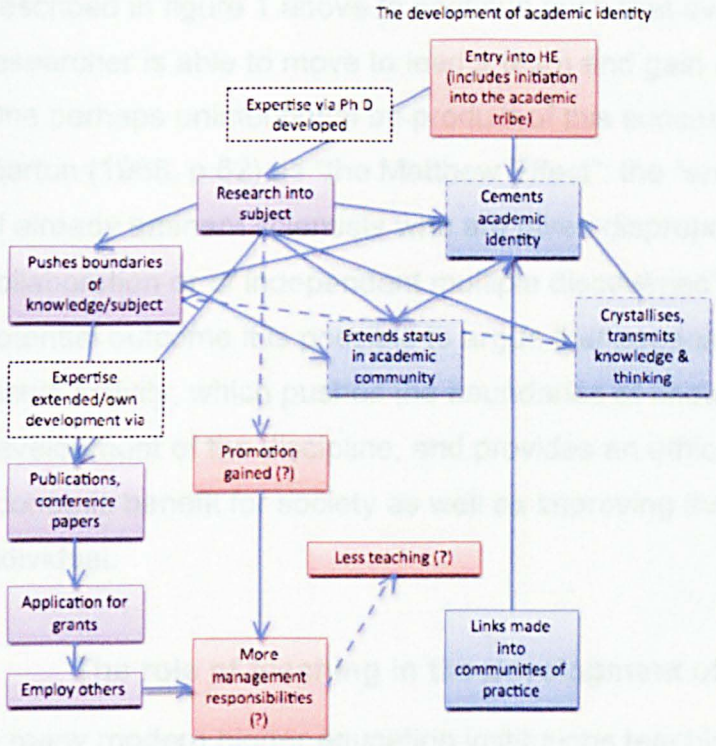


Figure 3. Stage 2 in the interconnected nature of the academic life cycle

Because outputs from this type of subject-specific research are one of the key avenues through which career progression and the associated rewards are achieved, it is possible to argue that they are highly valued by the academy. In most cases this value is not concerned with direct financial reward but with an increase in recognition and status within the tribe such as promotion to titles such as 'Professor' (which is also understood more widely by society at large as signifying a high status academic). This is illustrated in figure 3 above using a different colour (red as opposed to purple) from the research activities in order to illustrate that such activities are different in nature. High status research also often has a monetary value to the institution through the grants it draws in and the staff it is then possible to employ. However, perhaps more importantly, the research has an equally tangible value by furthering the development of the discipline and thereby pushing the boundaries of knowledge. In the process, this research also brings the academic to the attention of the community, again helping them cement their place within the tribe, and increases their standing. This achievement helps provide the individual researcher with the necessary authority to further their research, apply for grants and other projects and publish. It also enables the rhythms

described in figure 1 above to continue such that over time the successful researcher is able to move to lead a team and gain credit from their outputs. One perhaps unintentional by-product of this success has been described by Merton (1968, p.62) as "the Matthew Effect": the "enhancement of the position of already eminent scientists who are given disproportionate credit in cases of collaboration or of independent multiple discoveries". Irrespective of this potential outcome it is possible to argue that academic research is a high status activity, which pushes the boundaries of knowledge, furthers the development of the discipline, and provides an ethical, philosophical and economic benefit for society as well as improving the career prospects of the individual.

v. The role of teaching in the development of the academic.

In many modern higher education institutions teaching is an integral part of the professional duties of an academic. However it can be argued that teaching is also more than that, it is a key part of their identity as an academic. Teaching and research may feed off each other. It may not be true to claim that they need each other – research after all exists and thrives employing academics that do no teaching – but it is possible to argue that they at least benefit from the presence of the other, although to what extent is contested, as is discussed below. In the diagram below teaching can be seen as a way for the academic to transmit the knowledge, skills and beliefs of their discipline to others; by doing so, teaching also initiates the student into the discipline: they are being prepared to join the "tribe" if this is appropriate and if that is what they wish.

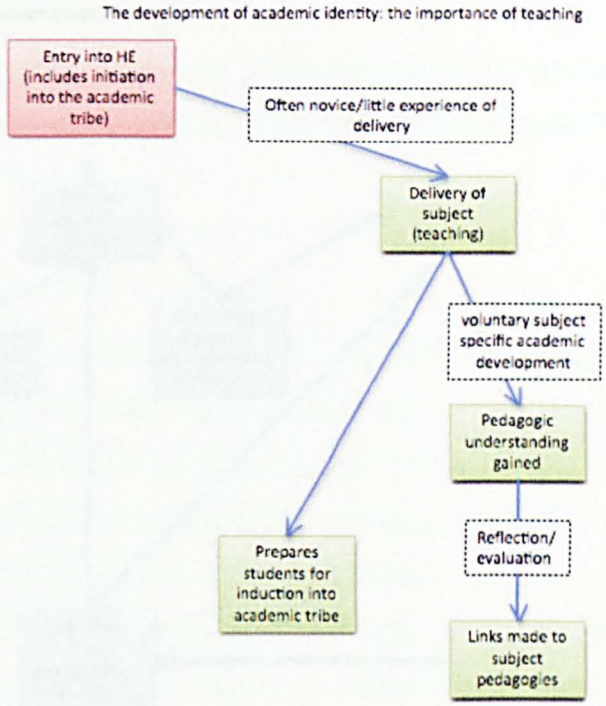


Figure 4. Stage 3 of the interconnected nature of the academic life cycle

However it is also possible to argue that the act of teaching others cultivates the discipline and has a direct benefit to the tutor's research role and to their professional, subject-based identity, since it enables the academic to refine their ideas. Such an argument sees the act of teaching as one that forces the academic to synthesise and crystallise their own knowledge and that of others in order to transmit it to (in this case) their students. This is a continuous process, and as such is illustrated in the figure below using a double-headed arrow.

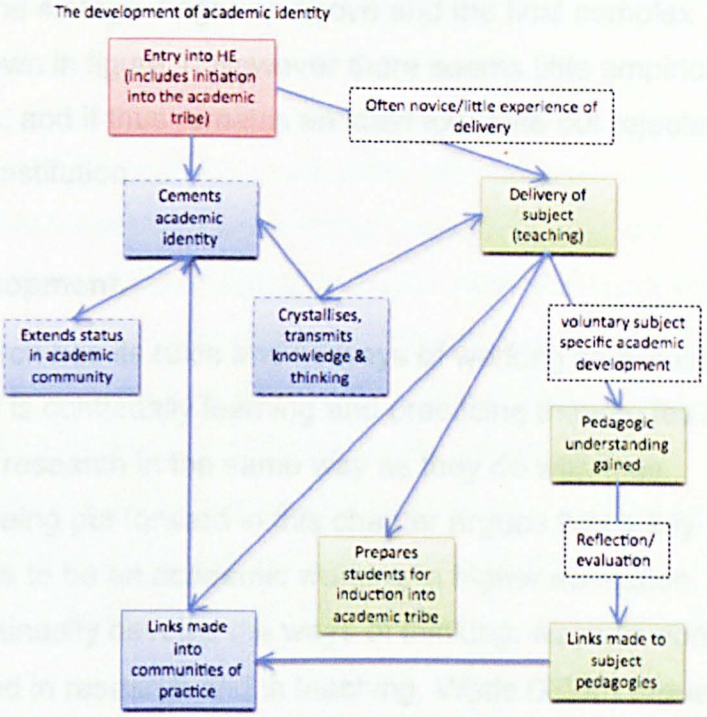


Figure 5. Stage 4 of the interconnected nature of the academic life cycle

Evans (1999, p.10) argues that teaching without research "denies expertise, turns the academic into a school teacher, and pulls him or her virtually out of the discipline and perhaps out of the overall academic profession."

This is not however an uncontested point of view: Jenkins (2004, p.4) agrees with Zaman (2004) in concluding that

> "The evidence gathered...suggests that research and quality teaching are not contradictory roles. However, we cannot conclude from the information at hand that the link is strongly positive. The evidence indicates the relationship may be modestly positive, though it is likely to be stronger at postgraduate than undergraduate levels..."

Coate et al (2001) also argued the case that good researchers do not necessarily make good teachers some three years earlier. They argued that although it was possible to see teaching and research as connected, since both were 'learning processes,' they contended that "the assumption that good researchers will also be good teachers has been described as a 'myth' of higher education...and so too is perhaps the belief that research enhances teaching." (p.172)

At best then it is possible to restate a belief, perhaps even a hope, that the research and teaching roles academics take on do benefit each other, as has

been demonstrated in the 4 stage diagrams above and the final complex interconnectedness shown in figure 1. However there seems little empirical evidence to support this, and it thus remains an ideal for some but rejected by others within the same institution.

vi. Academic development.

Just as academic research has its rules and its ways of working so it is with teaching. The academic is continually learning and practicing these rules and ways of working in their research in the same way as they do with their teaching. The position being put forward in this chapter argues that a key characteristic of what it is to be an academic working in higher education today is the need to continually develop the ways of thinking, ways of working and the skill sets involved in research and in teaching. Watts (2000) argues that it is not sufficient for academics operating in today's higher education environment to have a detailed, current and comprehensive specialist knowledge in order to be successful in their role as teacher; this alone will not ensure the successful transmission of that knowledge and thus successful learning on the part of the student:

> "...it is an academic knowledge of a subject discipline combined with a professional knowledge of teaching and education that are embraced by the term 'professional'. Having an academic knowledge-base alone does not necessarily make an academic a professional..." (Watts, 2000, p.13)

Coate et al (2001) backed this up by identifying scholarship (of learning and teaching) as the key. This notion of the scholarship of learning and teaching has a considerable field of literature attached to it, as Trigwell et al (2000) explain in some detail, but most of the developments seem to build on the work of Boyer (1990) in seeing the need to redress the balance between teaching and research. Boyer (1990, p.16) argued that there were four "separate yet overlapping functions of scholarship": the scholarship of discovery, perhaps closest to what is meant when academics speak of "research"; the scholarship of integration, where academics put seemingly isolated facts into context and make connections; the scholarship of application, which develops what Trigwell et al (2000, p.155) describe as a

"vital interaction" between the two other scholarships described and the scholarship of teaching which is concerned with successfully and enthusiastically communicating the vital interactions described before so that others – students – might be inspired to continue the work already started. Coate et al (2001), it could be argued, are building on Boyer's work by understanding "scholarship" to mean that the academic needs to have an understanding of pedagogic theory and practice. They need to work to keep this up-to-date in the same way as they would with research findings in their specialism and to use this knowledge and understanding to inform their teaching. They argued that good teaching could take place without a research background but that good teaching could not take place without scholarship, a theme developed further by Trigwell et al (2000) and then by Trigwell and Shale (2004).

Eraut and Cole (1993) had considered this theme earlier and had identified three characteristics that define the professional; learning from others, being users and creators of knowledge, and sustaining a critical and evaluative attitude towards practice so that they seek to improve it. So far this chapter has discussed the first two of these characteristics, but the third and final characteristic – evaluating one's own practice and seeking to improve it – differs in that it is often (although not exclusively) enacted with the help and support of other colleagues rather than alone. This can be achieved through discussion with colleagues in the same subject area. This is often successful because the colleagues are members of the same "tribe" and thus understand the context and the demands being made. However there is also a danger with this approach that the support and guidance given will be insular in nature and in transmitting the norms and values of the "tribe" may perpetuate existing approaches and thinking and not extend or challenge the individual or their practice.

One alternative to this is to engage with colleagues from outside of one's own discipline in what Breslow et al (2004, p.87) have described as "inquiry into learning and teaching". This would involve colleagues working on common projects but at all times having "(a recognition of) the rules governing the exploration and reporting of knowledge in (each) discipline" (p.88). In essence then this is concerned with "stimulating intellectual curiosity" (p.83) whilst

working in parallel. This may not lead to fully integrated working across subject disciplines but it is a start and as Breslow et al argue it does acknowledge that "epistemological variables are not consistent across fields and these need to be explored for (any project) work to proceed most effectively" (p.87).

Another alternative is to engage with colleagues from within one's own subject discipline in events organised by those outside of the discipline, perhaps employed within a central unit with expertise – and even research outputs - in this type of pedagogic activity. The use of those outside of the subject discipline has the potential to encourage those involved to consider their work afresh and to gain from the perspective of someone who is at a distance from the immediate issues and who thus may be able to provide a different way of looking at things. In some HEIs this type of event could be described as "staff development" in others it is described as "academic development". It is possible to argue that there is more than a lexical difference between the two terms. Staff development might be seen as being concerned with corporate themes and treating those attending as employees of the corporation[1], whilst academic development is specifically concerned with themes connected to the development of academic identity. Smylie (1988, p.2) described three functions of staff development; promoting "organisational change" by introducing new courses, technologies and procedures, "ensur(ing) compliance" to existing ways of working, usually involving administration and "improv(ing)... performance in the classroom." The discussion in this chapter concentrates on this last function and understands this to be a part of "academic development". However before discussing this in detail there is a need to problematise the management connotations behind the use of the word "performance" in Smylie's description. The assumptions behind the term "improving performance in the classroom" are that firstly teaching can be (easily) judged using performance measures and then improved as necessary, but secondly that as a result of funding the type of staff development Smylie describes, an institution will see the achievement of their

[1] This type of activity has been termed 'organisational development' in some HEIs, a term and set of understandings imported from business in general and Human Resource Management in particular (see www.cipd.co.uk).

students improve. Smylie (1988) himself argues that if this is the aim there is little evidence that it is successful and it might be argued that because student achievement is due to a complex range of factors then expecting a single type of intervention to achieve improvement is naïve at the very least. Instead then such staff development might be argued to be more to do with surveillance and control of teachers and academics by an untrusting management culture. It is for this reason that this chapter is concerned with academic development.

vii. Signature pedagogies.

Typically the type of academic development activity this chapter is concerned with involves the individual being offered the opportunity to voluntarily undertake pedagogic but discipline-specific academic development in order to further their own expertise as a professional engaged in all aspects of teaching and learning. It is important to understand that this is not the same type of activity as attending or participating at subject-specific conferences and seminars because these are concerned primarily with disseminating research findings and developing research opportunities, as discussed above. This understanding of academic development also does not focus primarily on improving student achievement; this would be part of Smylie's description of staff development above. If student achievement is improved by academic development sessions it is a by-product of the academic evaluating and perhaps changing the ways that they teach. The voluntary nature of this activity is important, since it helps to differentiate it from corporate activities such as institutional induction or management requirements such as appraisal training. These activities may be interpreted as being concerned with issues of (mis) trust, professional competence and managerial control. Academics might volunteer to undertake this type of academic development for a number of reasons: to agree what the important knowledge, skills and beliefs are that need to be transmitted to students; to have time to reflect upon their own practice; to connect with others in their own or other areas of interest. Finally, what at first sight appears to operate at an instrumental level, they attend such sessions in order to be better able to transmit the knowledge, skills and beliefs of their discipline to their students because, as Morehead and Shedd

(1996) and more recently Norton et al (2010) describe, they consider the facilitation of student learning as one of their key roles. This final reason results in the identification of what Gurung et al (2009) refer to as the "signature pedagogies". These are the "ways of thinking that are essential to a particular discipline...(or)...what it means to think, create, demonstrate, know and evaluate" (p.3) in a given academic discipline they "evoke the core characteristics of a discipline." (p.4). As such this requirement to teach others becomes a crucial part of what it is to be an academic and a professional in higher education. These "signature pedagogies" are also described as the "defining characteristics that, when explicated, reveal the deepest beliefs and practices of professional apprenticeship" (p.xv) "types of teaching that organise the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions" (p.xii). Thus by searching for the most effective ways to teach the subject the academic is also engaged in finding out what constitutes their academic discipline. In doing so they are also linking back to the norms and values of a subject discussed above.

It might be argued that by practising in their discipline an academic is developing expertise in these "signature pedagogies", however to be aware of these "defining characteristics" is to be engaged in what is now often termed the scholarship of teaching since it involves taking the same kind of scholarly approach to the transmission of knowledge, skills and attributes as would be taken to push the boundaries that form the discipline. The scholarship of teaching is however more than a series of tricks or techniques, as Sharpe (2004) warns, it is wider. For Sharpe professional knowledge (the equivalent of "signature pedagogies") cannot have a "standardised, explicit and fixed knowledge base" but instead "exists in its use, is ethical in its use and is changed by experience" (p.137). Sharpe (2004, p.142) describes this as "situated learning...(which) recognizes and emphasises the importance of learning in context." Eraut (1994, p.134) agrees, seeing expert knowledge as "domain-specific" but sounds a warning of the limitations to this expertise, arguing that "A (professional) with acknowledged expertise in one speciality will perform no better than average in another." For Boud and Walker (1998) gaining professional expertise is also about reflection. They argue that true

reflection is an important and necessary element in creating the academic professional, although it is also a misunderstood or misinterpreted concept. They, like Sharpe, take Schön's (1983) original concept of the reflective practitioner and apply it specifically to modern higher education. For Sharpe (2004, p.138) reflective practice is concerned with developing "professional artistry" – noting what is happening at the time (Schön's reflection-in-action) and considering it after the event (Schön's reflection-on-action). For Boud and Walker reflection is not about learning specific techniques or following certain narrow rules, which they would see as too mechanistic, it is instead about an awareness of the "micro-climate" (p.214) that academics operate within, be that epistemological, social, political or a combination of these and more. It is also about allowing them to contextualise everything to fit in that climate. For Eraut (1994) it is about thinking creatively when confronted with a problem and adapting existing knowledge. It might therefore be argued that successful academic development should take all of this into account whilst also being discipline-specific so that it is also immediately useful. In this way such academic development stands a greater chance of being of interest and taken up by the academic. It is possible to argue then, that anything else would be seen as removed from the interests and concerns of the academic and therefore less useful to their main aims and needs. It might therefore be argued that it is through the act of making academic development discipline and context-specific that there might seem to be a direct connection between improved teaching and improved student learning. This is exemplified in the use of 'distance travelled' that emerges from the research evaluated in chapter 5.

viii. Communities of practice.

So far this discussion of academic development has concentrated essentially on *what* are seen to be the characteristics – the "signature pedagogies" - of the modern professional academic and the ways in which these enable academic development to be successful. The other key factor in successful academic development is *who* the other people are that they work with.

Wenger (1998, p.4) used the term "communities of practice" to describe the social model of learning whereby human beings naturally gather together, share experiences, value experiences that are shared, learn from those shared experiences and create meaning about the world from them. This wide, general notion has been specifically applied to professionals working in education so that Sharpe (2004) sees professional learning as a way of entering into this community: in this way it is akin to being initiated into the tribal concept discussed previously. Elsewhere Fanghanel (2009) argues that the communities of practice induct novices by expecting them to watch and learn from more experienced members of the community. This is thus a process of socialisation which has many benefits to the members of the community but, Fanghanel warns, could stop members of one community communicating and sharing with those outside of its borders. In this scenario communal identity is of crucial importance because it helps to safeguard the survival of the community. However Norton et al (2010, p.354) suggest that subject disciplines can be "narrow enclaves" that restrict. The application of this model to modern higher education can break down because modern academics belong to many communities at the same time, perhaps as part of a teaching team delivering on degree programmes in other parts of the faculty, perhaps working with colleagues in other parts of the institution drawn together because of an externally funded project, perhaps as a group created to devise an institutional academic policy or strategy, or perhaps in the role of learner on an institutional "Introduction to Teaching" programme. Fanghanel's (2009) response is that a community of practice can be constructed around many more things than a subject discipline: they can thus be temporary or time-specific as well as permanent or semi-permanent, they can demand or create allegiances or belonging which is also variable because they are constantly evolving, as illustrated in the examples above. The specific example of the institutional "Introduction to Teaching" programme is considered by Rust (2000) and later Smith (2004). Rust argues that they change behaviour and Smith adds to this by arguing that this particular community of practice not only develops reflective practitioners and develops competence and confidence, but also, by its very existence, values teaching

and begins the process of developing the flexibility which will enable the participants to see beyond Norton's narrow enclaves.

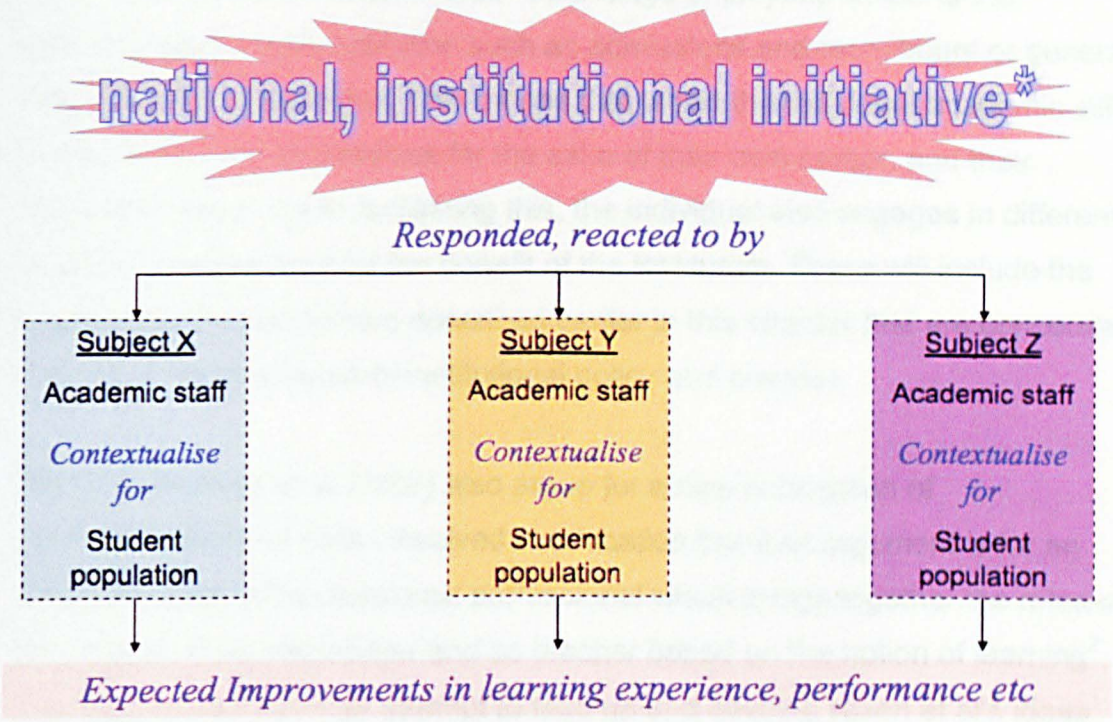
Communities of practice can be defined by common approaches to specific aspects of pedagogy – approaches to assessment or to e-learning for example. Trowler (2009) picks up this idea but suggests that even though an individual academic may belong to more than one community of practice, these are still grouped together under the general heading of the subject discipline. Reimann (2009) agrees. She discusses the specific role of the "Introduction to teaching" programmes discussed above and argues that

> "(such) programmes in learning and teaching in higher education...tend to be characterised by a predominantly generic curriculum – usually by necessity as they bring together staff from a large variety of subjects – while the participants often perceive their learning needs to arise from the 'situatedness' of their practice: situated in their disciplines, departments and workgroups. This has the potential to create tensions and dissatisfaction." (Reimann, 2009, p.85)

Norton et al (2010) argue that these types of programmes enable staff to gain an understanding of practice elsewhere in their institution, but they also argue that staff on these programmes are not always able to apply this understanding to their own context. This may in part be due to professional body requirements or because they have inherited curriculum with established ways of delivering that provision or it may be due to what is described as "institutional, managerial and discipline constraints" (p.353).

This tension and possible dissatisfaction also exists as a possibility for more experienced academics. Picking up on Trowler's (2009) understanding of an individual belonging to more than one community simultaneously, the academic may for example be part of an expert community on Shakespeare, may be part of another community concerned with assessment in that field and yet another interested in engaging students with online learning through the use of social networking, but these all come under a general umbrella of "English". This finds a real echo in the institution micro study described in chapter 5. For Trowler, such a conception does not suggest any linkages across subject disciplines, so that the academic's interest in e-learning in English does not mean that they are immediately interested in e-learning

more generally across the institution, except perhaps where it may benefit their own subject (or perhaps tribal) needs or requirements. For a more general, almost altruistic interest to occur the needs and benefits for the individual and their subject discipline would have to be satisfied first. The same is true with regard to initiatives originated externally to the subject discipline. An example of this could be the government agenda regarding widening participation or the introduction of a new institutional policy on assessment or a new approach to personal tutoring. Using Fanghanel's (2009) and Trower's (2009) understanding of communities of practice, this external initiative would be imposed upon a community, who would react in a way that was appropriate to them and would (hopefully) benefit their potential students, as illustrated in figure 6 below: Here the initiative is represented through its shape as a brand new idea which may start at a national or institutional level. This initiative will then be responded to individually by the various subject communities, their distinctiveness and separateness represented by the individual boxes in different colours. The results may be expected improvements in the whole student learning experience, sometimes measured (despite the caveats discussed above) by student performance.



*examples include: approaches to widening participation, institutional assessment policies, personal tutorial arrangements etc

Figure 6: The reaction of individual subject communities to external (national) initiatives

Success is therefore bound up in the local identity; in this model there is little or no true cross discipline response. Should an institution respond to a national initiative, as is often the case, it is possible to argue that this is in reality a collection of separate responses collated into an institutional response which may give the impression of cohesion and agreement; however at all times the subject boundaries remain intact.

ix. The changing nature of professional academic working.

Blackmore et al (2010) argue that this view of separate subject disciplines (or tribes) and their academic members of staff operating in parallel to one another rather than in an integrated way is changing. They argue that although tribalism still operates within the modern university setting this is becoming far more "permeable". This is partly because academic staff are becoming increasingly nomadic as part-time working or short-term contracts become more common but also because academic staff now increasingly

work with "academic support staff" on a range of projects linked to the strategic aims of the institution such as admissions and recruitment or general management of provision. This means that whilst the individual academic still wants to develop themselves for the sake of their own career, and their institution has a role in facilitating this, the individual also engages in different types of development for the benefit of the institution. These will include the types of staff development described earlier in this chapter that are concerned with the implementation of institutional policy and practice.

Elsewhere Nixon et al (1997) also argue for a new conception of professionalism for those involved in education but their argument is for an understanding of the academic professional which brings together the roles of the academic as researcher and as teacher based on the notion of learning[2]. The diagram below is an attempt to take up and develop Nixon et al's ideas:

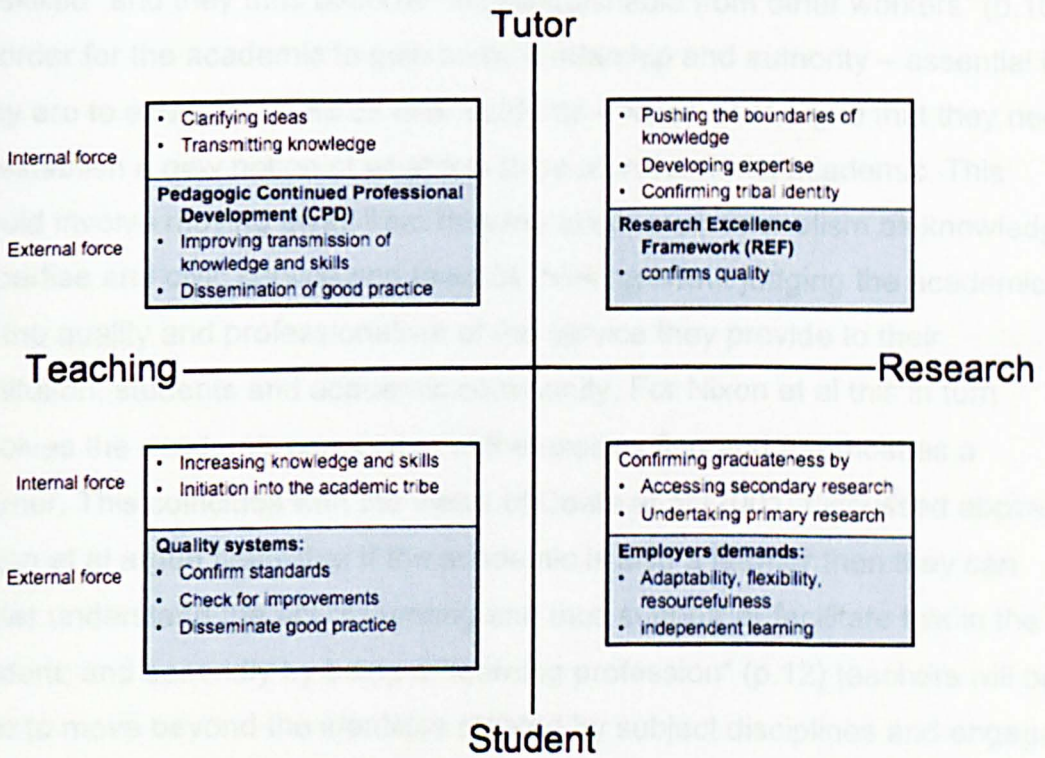


Figure 7: An interpretation of Nixon et al (1997) conception of academic professionalism

In this model the key roles of the academic are subject to both internal and

[2] This is further developed in chapter 3 with an especial focus on the impact that the imposition of quality assurance process has had on the professional identity of the academic.

external forces as labelled. The internal forces shown, summarise ideas already discussed about the way the academic sees their role while the external forces illustrate the pressures on academics today to adapt or change. The twin axes (teaching: research and tutor: student) represent the key roles that make up the academic's professional identity. Nixon et al's response to these forces is the "learning professional". Nixon argues that the notion of a professional academic has evolved from the post war understanding of autonomous experts and civic leaders who would "offer service, accepting honour and authority as payment" (p.6) to a position where academics are still seen as "guardians of specialist knowledge and technique" (p.8) but who "have little impact on organisational behaviour" (p.9) and as a result tend to work within the norms of organisational behaviour rather than leading it. For Nixon this presents the danger that academics are in reality deprofessionalised because their work is "increasingly routinized and deskilled" and they thus become "indistinguishable from other workers" (p.10). In order for the academic to gain some leadership and authority – essential if they are to exert the same on their students – Nixon et al argue that they need to establish a new notion of what it is to be a professional academic. This would involve moving away from thinking about professionalism as knowledge expertise and civic service and towards thinking about judging the academic by the quality and professionalism of the service they provide to their institution, students and academic community. For Nixon et al this in turn involves the academic conceiving of themselves first and foremost as a learner. This coincides with the views of Coate et al (2001) discussed above. Nixon et al argue firstly that if the academic is also a learner then they can better understand the act of learning and thus support or facilitate this in the student; and secondly by being a "learning profession" (p.12) teachers will be able to move beyond the identities created by subject disciplines and engage in "agreement-making" (p.25) in order to create a new consensus based around the emerging identity of the learning professional. Nixon suggests that this will entail "unlearning" old ideas of subject distinctiveness and separateness as the primary characteristics of the academic, as described earlier in this chapter, whilst still acknowledging difference, and instead moving to "a new kind of 'professionality': an emergent set of practices

imbued with an ethics of integrative action that seeks to accommodate differing values and cultural outlooks" (p.26). Hanbury et al (2008) see this same need for change as a move towards a student-focussed approach. They argue that *Introduction to Teaching* programmes, as described above, have a key role to play here since they can often foster a student-focussed approach by requiring participants to interact and become aware of other ways of helping students to learn. In so doing Hanbury is reinforcing research findings by Trigwell et al (1999) who found that

> "...in the classes where teachers describe their approach to teaching as having a focus on what they do and on transmitting knowledge, students are more likely to report that they adopt a surface approach to the learning of that subject. Conversely, but less strongly, in the classes where students report adopting significantly deeper approaches to learning, teaching staff report adopting approaches to teaching that are more oriented towards students and to changing the students conceptions." (Trigwell, 1999, p.57)

In contrast to Reimann (2009) discussed earlier, Hanbury et al's (2008) research suggests that those who attend programmes such as these are significantly more student-focussed and as a result they help their students achieve. They are also more likely – at least in the short term - to become involved with initiatives and communities of practice that cross subject boundaries. This in turn may have a possible positive effect on the individual's career progression.

Although not as a direct response to this development but in a move parallel to it, Watts (2000) argues that the current emphasis on the accreditation of teaching in higher education could be regarded as a move towards Nixon et al's (2001b) vision of the professionalisation of academic staff in higher education. Elsewhere, Whitchurch (2009, p.407) discusses the "rise of the blended professional" and their emergence with a new type of role in higher education. This echoes Blackmore et al (2010) views described previously about the move for academic staff to work with academic support staff on a range of institutional projects. Whitchurch's argument builds on earlier work where she argued that the traditionally separate worlds of the academic, the administrator and the manager in higher education are becoming more

permeable and that "a third space is opening up between professional and academic domains...creating new dimensions to the workforce map" (Whitchurch, 2008, p.3). These "blended professionals" (2008, p.23) help subject experts and others move from their local context to an understanding of the wider context within which the local operates. They have an understanding of the multiple worlds that exist within a university and work to "create alliances" across subject boundaries. They see leadership as a crucial role but do not necessarily want to identify themselves with managerial approaches; instead they have to create a new credibility which is their own in order to work across multiple domains. This, she argues, is necessary if initiatives are to succeed and policy is to be implemented. The importance of this new type of professional and the notion of a 'third space' for this particular chapter is that their emergence also has consequences for the way that existing academic professionals see themselves and are seen by others. This adds weight to Nixon et al's claim for an "unlearning" of existing understandings and the need for 'a new kind of 'professionality" as discussed above. These understandings of an emerging new professional academic identity in higher education also come out of the primary research associated with this thesis through the concept of a "hybrid professional" discussed in chapter 5; however it is with the notion of the academic professional as the autonomous subject expert that I will end. Watts (2000, p.13) argues that an "increasing distrust of professionals, and of professional autonomy, by society in general during the 1980s and 1990s has led to a far greater emphasis on monitoring, quality and accountability for professional services" and it this which has led to a change both in the nature of the professional academic and in the way that they are perceived by the wider society in which they operate. It is therefore to this that the next chapter turns.

Chapter 3. Striving to improve: the relationship between individual academics and Quality Assurance systems in English Higher Education.

i. Introduction.

This chapter will move from the previous chapter's consideration of the ways in which the individual academic's drive to increase their own knowledge and understanding, and push the boundaries of their subject helps improve what they do for their students to consider the way this might interact with an institution's quality systems and processes. It will also examine the historical reasons for such systems and the way they are currently developing at a national level. The assumption throughout is that quality systems are the result of policy initiatives and that these in turn have a ideological basis. Any system that results from or is part of a policy initiative is therefore also ideological.

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, the identification and dissemination of good practice in learning and teaching can be seen as part of what an academic might do in order to improve their own learning. This, it might be argued, is perhaps what Nixon et al (1997, p.6) conceived of as the "learning professional". Through becoming a reflective practitioner, as Rust (2000) sees it, the academic is also indirectly improving the learning experience of their students. These ways of operating leave the onus on the individual academic and see the impetus to improve oneself as their own responsibility, stemming from the academic freedom that has traditionally been part of the role of an academic working in English higher education. However, once this way of thinking about the role of the academic is accepted as beneficial to the individual and their students, it is but a small step to suggesting that other academics and their students might benefit from such a way of working, and then the approach quickly becomes systematised across an institution. When a way of working such as this moves from an individual initiative to being part of an institution-wide process then individual ownership is lost. When the way of working becomes part of a quality assurance process and it becomes normalised and thus required by the institution of all academic individuals or teams then ownership by the individual is not only lost it is transferred to the institution, who in turn often has to serve external agents

such as the Quality Assurance Agency. This can cause resentment or disengagement. Once the way of working becomes a requirement from those in a management position then the direct link back to the individual academic striving to improve their own students' learning is broken. The key therefore is to try to make the quality process empowering and enabling for the individual academic, something that is useful to them. If this is achieved it is possible to see it as a quality improvement or enhancement process. Such a quality improvement process cannot eradicate the systematic, process-driven nature of the activity and cannot deny that the outcomes are also used by the wider institution and other external agents, but it does attempt to keep the ownership and responsibility for action as local as is possible so that the power is as close to the individual academic as is possible and the benefit is seen as primarily for their students.

Attitudes towards this quality improvement approach will vary. There will be those who consider any attempt to disseminate, promote and systematise an individual's or team's way of working across an institution as a form of imposition and compulsion which demonstrates the increasing rise of managerialism, diminishes academic freedom and is to be resisted. Such a view would perhaps argue that the individual academic would already engage in such activities as a natural part of the way that they work, no external pressure or requirement is necessary. Elton (2006, p.127) refers to this as "intrinsic pride of doing a job well...in the Greek concept of arête – pride in one's work (which) formed the only reliable assurance of quality..." Elsewhere others may find any requirements to be an intrusion but they can see the benefits for their own students and so comply. Finally there will be other academics who have directly benefited from the good practice of others and therefore see the system working[3] and others who have created a similar process for themselves[4] and therefore feel ownership is retained at a local level.

The following chapter, in considering models of quality and the development of quality systems in English higher education seeks to place in a national

[3] The micro case described in chapter 5 is an example of this.

[4] The use I10 made of team agendas and discussed in chapter 5 is an example of this.

context a movement from assuring the quality of provision for an external audience towards an emphasis on improving it for the local context.

ii. Why define quality at all?

As a first stage it is worth considering why it is important to have such systems for assuring and improving the quality of the learning experience at all. One answer is because notions of quality are bound up with making judgments, putting things into some sort of order, saying some things are better – not just different from – other things. Ramsden (1993, p.90) was clearly comfortable with this notion; indeed he dismissed as "myth" the idea that good practice in learning and teaching could not be identified:

> Among these (myths) are the belief that good teaching in higher education is an elusive, many sided, idiosyncratic and ultimately indefinable quality, and that it therefore cannot be measured or legislated for...

He then goes on to show, through a model of describing the opposite, just what he believes "good" teaching to involve:

> ... because the greater part of learning in higher education takes place apart from lectures and other formal classes, then teaching is not very important; that bad teaching is really good teaching (unpopular, even dreadful, teachers in higher education are actually better than popular and helpful ones because the former force students to be "independent") that knowledge of the subject matter is sufficient as well as necessary for proficient teaching; that undergraduate students who are not taught by practising researchers will receive poorer teaching; that if students don't learn, it's not the teacher's responsibility (a variety of the "blame the students" syndrome).

It is possible to sideline these views as out of kilter with the way thinking on this subject has moved in general, but it is worth remembering that Ramsden was, until the end of 2009, Chief Executive of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and as such was seen to represent to the government the voice of the academic working in higher education; his opinions therefore carry perhaps a disproportionate amount of weight.

Whilst making judgements may seem an ordinary activity, when viewed from a Marxist perspective it is possible to argue that it is also intrinsically bound up with notions of power. The *ability* to make a judgment may not alter from one person to another – we all, after all, have opinions on just about everything; but what does change is the way that the judgment is listened to and responded to; that changes from person to person depending upon the amount of power and influence that they have. Equally important is the idea that once defined, systems are put in place for maintaining that definition of quality and imposed from outside upon those working within the organisation. We usually refer to this as Quality Assurance. Elton (2006) sees this as being at the expense of collegiality, which he argues is a more effective way of assuring the quality of provision. Nixon (2004, p.165) goes further and argues that the imposition of quality assurance systems has led to the deprofessionalisation of what he terms the "academic worker." Enders and Musselin (2008) and Henkel (2005) concur, with the former arguing that the academic profession is "under pressure" (p.145) and "is now considered less an occupation and more as a job" (p.139), and the latter seeing a significant change in the "primacy of the discipline". Elsewhere Macfarlane (2004) sees these forces as shaping a new understanding of professionalism, Sachs (2001, p.149) argues it is a "site of struggle" and Strike (2007) and Williams (2008) question whether teaching can be called a profession at all. Finally and perhaps most ironically of all Woodhead (2009), the ex-head of Ofsted promotes the debate by challenging the very notion of what it is to be a professional in education.

Barnett (1992) argues forcefully that it is the way that judgements about the quality of an educational experience have been reduced to "a single-minded check-list approach to safeguarding quality (which) is *misguided, ineffective* and *pernicious*" (p.119). Thus it is the imposed systems and processes that have been put in place to make judgements and to safeguard quality that are at fault rather than the act of making judgements per se. It is worth considering two of Barnett's three terms in some detail: Barnett argues that these systems are *misguided* because they are based on an assumption that "error can be eliminated" (Barnett, 1992, p.119). Barnett's view is that what is central to improving the quality of the student learning experience is not

simply identifying and rectifying mistakes but something much more profound: "...being continually thoughtful, resourceful and capable. The idea of error elimination is almost always neither here nor there" (Barnett, 1992, p.119). This idea of "being continually thoughtful" – or reflective - links back to the ideas discussed in the introduction to this chapter about the ways in which individual academics wish to improve what they do as part of their own conception of their role as academics. Another of Barnett's main claims is that reducing the assurance and improvement of the quality of the educational experience to a simple checklist – or audit, to use the term QAA prefer and to which Barnett is referring – is "*pernicious*". He argues that "the check-list approach to quality is pernicious because its hidden function is to reduce the area of spontaneity, originality and creativity...(it is an approach concerned with) control, prediction and uniformity" (p.121). He argues that such an approach is "anti-humanistic" because it demands that individuals follow the rules as laid down rather than being trusted to work to improve things using their own judgements and methods. He argues that it is only by allowing individual academics the freedom to "invest something of themselves in (quality processes)" and by giving them "the freedom to interpret and colour their role in their own way" (p.120) that the real quality of the student experience will improve. This is akin to Elton's (2006) understanding of the importance of collegiality. Anything short of this is in reality a sham because it is merely concerned with playing by or manipulating the rules; in this way it is ineffective and inefficient. Others would be more cynical. The work of Michel Foucault, particularly *Discipline and Punish*, originally published as *Surveiller et punir* in 1975, suggest a view of quality systems where Elton and Barnett's idea of academics investing in a process because they feel they have some freedom to interpret and are perhaps empowered is in reality a chimera.

Surveiller et punir can be seen as an allegory for the way in which recent educational policy and practice has developed. In particular it is possible to use Foucault's interpretation of Jeremy Bentham's Panoptican as a way of critiquing the current cultural shift towards accountability and, at its extreme, surveillance.

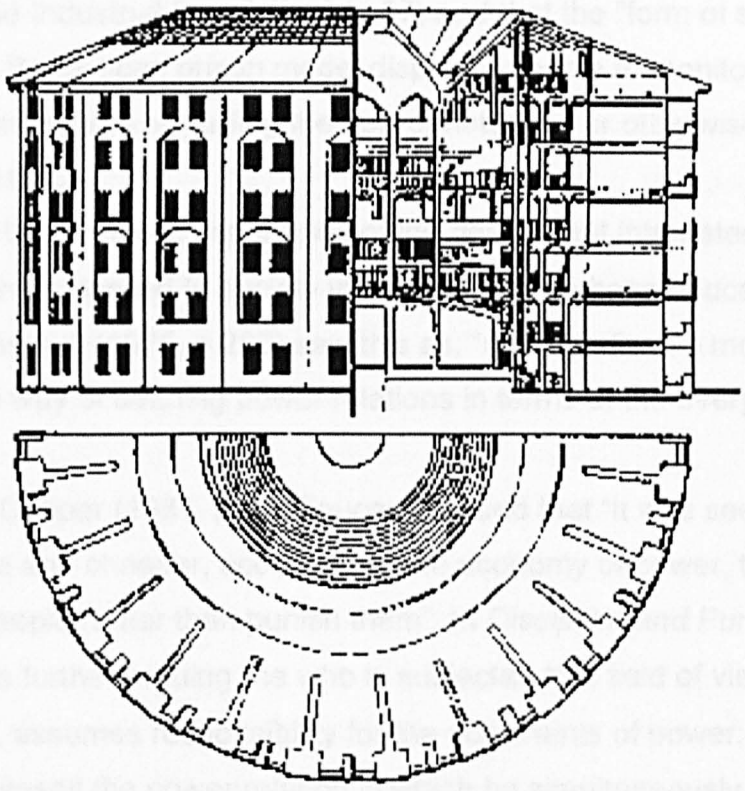


Figure 8. Jeremy Bentham's Panoptican[5].

Bentham's Panoptican, illustrated above, was a prison designed in the late18th century. According to Danaher (2000, p.xiv) it consisted of:

> ...a tower placed in a central position within the prison. From this tower the guards would be able to observe every cell and the prisoners inside them, but it was designed in such a way that the prisoners would never know whether they were being observed or not. Prisoners would assume that they could be observed at any moment and would adjust their behaviour accordingly.

Although the Panoptican was never built in Bentham's lifetime it has been since and thus its ideas have now been tried out on human beings and its influence is significant. For Foucault it is the idea of prisoner adjusting their own behaviour that is of interest.

Danaher argues that Bentham's motives were "to calculate how the greatest happiness for the greatest number could be achieved" (p.48) and that the Panoptican embodies "the general principle of surveillance throughout the social body" (p.54). It emerged at "an historic moment when it had become necessary to produce a pliable, healthy and sober workforce to service the

[5] Image downloaded from www.wilsonsalmanac.com, accessed 02.08.08

factories of the Industrial Revolution" (p.57) and that the "form of surveillance based on the Panoptican prison model disposed people to monitor themselves and others regarding the appropriateness or otherwise of types of behaviour" (p.62).

However it is the symbolic importance of the design that interested Foucault and which can be applied to society in general and perhaps education in particular. Foucault (1975, p.205) saw this as: "a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men."

According to Cooper (1981, p.82) Foucault argued that "it was seen to be more effective and cheaper, according to the economy of power, to keep watch over people rather than punish them". In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault goes further arguing "he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power;...he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection." (p.202)

Cooper (1981) expands on the "generalizable model" by arguing that Foucault sees the Panoptican idea as capable of being:

> Expanded from its locus in the distinctive space of prison or school to society at large. Discipline would no longer be only a means to neutralize danger but would become the purpose of society. A disciplined society was useful, efficient and productive. And it was accompanied by a vast increase in the amount of information collected by the State so as to monitor and control the general population. That is, discipline itself was a technology of power. (Cooper, 1981, p.88)

Hoy (1986, p.75) backs this up by arguing that the Panoptican is emblematic of a "new philosophy of punishment...inspired by the need to control" and with regard to those who experience the regime of the Panoptican:

> The being who is thus examined, measured, categorized, made the target of policies of normalization is the one whom we have come to define as the modern individual.

Equally McNay (1994, p.93) argues that the Panoptican "installs a repressive system based on a principle of permanent surveillance which ensures the functioning of power." Stephen Ball (1990, p.165) sees 'management' as the

Panoptican. He describes this as a "micro-physics of power" and "the primary instrument in a hierarchy of continuous and functional surveillance...(management roles) are the practical application of power." Thus, the existence of these systems and the people that operate them has the effect that Bentham was looking for, namely that they change the way that, in this case teachers and academics, behave. Ball (1990, p.153) sees this as "...systems of administrative rationality that exclude (teachers) from an effective say in the kind of substantive decision-making that could equally well be determined collectively." He sees this system and others like it as "a discourse of efficiency" in which "the curriculum becomes a delivery system and teachers become technicians or operatives." (Ball, 1990 p.154) and that "just as the teacher is reconstructed as a technician within such a system, headteachers are already reconstructed as managers." (p.155). He also warns that "the paraphernalia of controls upon the work of the teacher is growing ever more sophisticated and oppressive." It is therefore possible to argue that for those who use Foucault's thesis in *Discipline and Punish* as the basis for a conception of quality, the idea of education being subject to measurement, judgement and categorization can not simply be dismissed as a whim of a particular political party – which would be reversible at the next general election – it is completely integrated into the educational landscape across all sectors and deeply engrained within the culture. The rise of the quality movement is merely an easily identifiable symbol of something much harder to repair: a lack of trust.

It is possible however to argue that there are ways of encouraging continuous improvement and teacher and institutional accountability which need not be pernicious in the way Barnett (1992) describes and Ball (1990) suggest. Putting aside the issues associated with more bureaucracy, it is possible to argue that seeking quality improvement foregrounds the student learning experience and helps to improve that experience. This is not an easy process. As Ball (1997) argues (in relation to schools, but as discussed in chapter 2, applying equally to higher education) institutions are complex and "inherently paradoxical". They have competing claims within them which "grate and collide" but which settle down into a way of working, perhaps an uneasy truce,

or what Ball (1997, p.317) describes as a "bricolage of memories, commitments, routines, bright ideas and policy effects." Because of this confusing and often contradictory set of inputs it becomes increasingly difficult to try to find an agreed common ground in relation to good practice in learning and teaching. This is because different individuals, teams or parts of the institution face different challenges and have different traditions and ways of working. Barnett (1992) refers to Becher and Trowler's original 1989[6]. contention, already discussed in chapter 2, that academics working in higher education are split into "a collection of tribes organised around discrete disciplines" and that "what counts as a proper appropriation of knowledge, what intellectual skills are most desired, or where the balance is to lie between theory and practice differs across subjects" (p.31). As has already been shown in chapter 2 with regard to ideas such as communities of practice and signature pedagogies, this is also true of approaches to learning and teaching. For example within my own institution, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society places a requirement upon the School of Pharmacy to assess its students predominantly using examinations, whilst the Education Studies subject area has moved over time to a position where they do not use examinations at any stage in their degree programmes to assess their students. Both departments would argue that they have effective and wholly justifiable ways of assessing their students and that they have refined their assessment regimes so that they could be seen as examples of good practice: however neither would regard the other's in this way and would certainly not wish to adopt such ways of working. Elsewhere both Business Studies and Dance subject teams are interested in finding ways to assess the process of working in groups, as opposed to simply assessing the output from that group work. For both subject areas group work is a crucial skill that their degree programme aims to develop in their students because that way of working is integral to the ways in which the students will have to work once they graduate. However when attempts have been made to bring the work of each team to the attention of the other and to highlight the generic similarities in learning and teaching that seem to lie below the surface differences of the

[6] This idea of academics being split into tribes which confirm their academic identities is further developed in Trowler (2002) and (2003)

subjects, both teams have found it impossible to absorb the expertise and successful approaches from the other; both citing the different local contexts that they work within.

If all of this holds true of an individual institution and its constituent parts, it is also seems logical that it would also hold true when one compares one institution with another. From this it might be argued that it is difficult, and perhaps even artificial, to try to find a *simple* set of descriptors to a complex issue just so that it will allow judgements to be made across all schools or all universities. As Barnett (1992) observes, how one conceives of the quality in (higher) education depends directly on how one conceives of (higher) education in the first place: it follows that if there is more than one view of what education is or should be – and there is – then there will be more than one view of what should be considered as a measure of quality. One might suggest that the reality of having only one measurement of quality across an institution or even nation demonstrates the imposition of the hegemonic view of what education is or should be.

The alternative to the simple set of relatively simple descriptors is a complex but more useful response, but this is likely to be more expensive and if the aim is to be able to compare programmes, subjects and institutions, it runs the risk of not providing the solution that is required. This is not a theoretical situation; there are very real examples of organisations developing quality regimes which enable judgements and comparisons to be made in ways which ignore the rich complexity of reality.
For example in the schools sector, Ofsted have created an inspection regime which now aims to validate a school's own self-evaluation. It is possible to argue that this means that the school has greater power within the relationship, however an alternative argument is that the school's self evaluation document is constructed according to very strict guidelines laid down by Ofsted and thus little advantage is gained for the school. Equally, although the school is able to manage its own improvement; it does so against a background of the 'threat' of further inspections.

As a part of this inspection regime Ofsted can, with perhaps three days notice and two days in school, label an institution, its staff and its pupils "Outstanding" at one extreme and as "inadequate" at the other (See the *Framework for the inspection of schools* (January 2008) and the *Handbook for inspecting colleges* (April 2007), both available to download from www.ofsted.gov.uk). This finds an exact parallel in the higher education sector in the reaction to the QAA graded profile for Subject Review (1993-2001). Ball (1997) wishes to 'problematise' this easy, even sloppy thinking and quick decision-making and this is discussed in the following sections

iii. The link between policy initiatives, and conceptions of Quality.

Government policy is now dominated by the rhetoric of accountability and the notion of safeguarding and raising standards. The Conservative government created the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) as part of the 1992 Education (Schools) Act and this organisation has been at the forefront of the accountability agenda in the compulsory sector – and now in the post 16 sector – ever since. For schools and colleges Ofsted can be said to be the final arbiters of what is "good" practice and what is not; they are thus agents of government policy. Whilst higher education does not have this way of working, it is still subject to the same overall accountability agenda. As will be seen below the QAA can also trace its roots back to 1992. The QAA describes itself, in its website[8] as

> "...an independent body funded by subscriptions from universities and colleges and through contracts with the higher education funding bodies...(who) carry out external quality assurance by visiting universities and colleges to review how well they are fulfilling their responsibilities."

Whilst this does not have the same notion to the fore as in schools and colleges, there is still very clearly a subtext of confirming standards. Barnett et al (2001, p.435) see accountability as perhaps inevitable, linked as it is, they argue, to Lyotard's (1984) notion of "performativity" which implies:

> ...doing, rather than knowing, and performance, rather than understanding. In a performative society, there is a mistrust of all

[8] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/WhatWeDo.asp [accessed 27 April 2010]

> things that cannot easily be quantified and measured. Those knowledge fields that were once intrinsically valued for their own sake must now demonstrate their relevance to the wider world.

Macfarlane (2004, p.13) sees the QAA, which he brackets with other "government agencies", as an example of the way that professional autonomy in the academy has been eroded. This is important because, as Watts (2000) argues, autonomy is seen as a key characteristic of what it is to be a professional in higher education. She also argues that there has been

> ...an increasing distrust of professionals and of professional autonomy, by society in general during the 1980s and 1990s (which) has led to a far greater emphasis on monitoring, quality and accountability for professional services. (Watts, 2000, p.13)

Skelton (2005, p.95) sees the QAA as being charged with "the readily quantifiable and measurable indicators of performance..." which will be shown later to be a mark of managerialism and accountability. In this he embraces Barnett's (1992, p.119) understanding of quality systems as "pernicious" if they reduce everything to "a single minded check-list approach" as discussed earlier. It was government policy that created both organisations because of an ideological drive to change the public sector. Thus the history of Quality and its interface with policy is important because it creates and administers processes that put into operation that ideology.

Whilst the chronology for the development of quality assurance mechanisms for the English higher education sector might be clear and stable[9], as one might expect the interpretations put upon that chronology are less so.

The chronology presented in Appendix 1 is linked to the expansion of higher education in England more widely. The change in emphasis presented can be interpreted as a movement from external agents attempting to impose uniformity, perhaps using the QAA's vision of 'Quality Assurance' as a proxy, to a final uneasy equilibrium characterised by self-regulated autonomy – using 'Quality Enhancement' as the proxy.

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[9] See Appendix 1 for a selection of key dates and events that emerge as significant to this discussion.

This movement is worth reflecting upon. On the one hand proponents of this movement would argue that within the concept of 'autonomy' there is an implicit acceptance of a mature relationship based upon an understanding that firstly HEIs control their own destiny and the quality of the products that they produce (namely the awards); secondly that the academics working within the institutions have professional autonomy as has been discussed in chapter 2; and finally that the institutions and academics are the correct agents to decide upon and safeguard the student learning experience required to achieve the levels needed to successfully graduate. On the other hand those more sceptical observers might emphasise the word 'regulated' and argue that despite any outward appearances this is still a form of control. They might point towards Foucault's conception of the Panoptican (discussed earlier in this chapter) as a modern and efficient form of imprisonment in which individuals are placed within a large (physical or metaphorical) cage: they may appear able to roam free but in truth they behave as though they are being watched constantly and are only free to roam within the confines of the cage.

What seems clear from the outset is that the issues facing English higher education have a long history. This suggests that there are obviously complex issues with no simple solution. Therefore any politician who suggests that there is a quick answer has at best only a superficial understanding of the sector and the problems it is grappling with. For example two of the biggest perennial questions that have emerged over time and which the higher education sector still faces are "*what* is HE for?" and "*who* is it for?"
In relation to the first Wagner (1989, p.29) raised the issue of "widening participation and the link to academic standards". He argues that the increase in student numbers from 200,000 home students in full-time higher education in 1962 to 500,000 in 1987– an increase from 8.5% to 14% of 18 year olds[10] –

[10] UUK provide data showing enrolments for all full-time students up by 34% from 1994/5 to 2008/09 and the "initial participation" in higher education rate of 17-30 year olds rose from 39% of the population in 1990/00 to 45% in 2008/09. See http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Documents/HigherEducationInFactsAndFiguresSummer2010.pdf

also meant a lowering of standards. He also raised the issue of lowering standards as seen through an increase in the A' Level pass rates.
Regarding the second, elsewhere Slee (1989, p.63) discusses the tension between safeguarding what he describes as "the autonomy of knowledge" against "the functionalization of higher education by the right" on the one hand and the State's need to have a highly educated and qualified workforce on the other. Both of these views find an echo in Shattock's (1983, p.13) earlier call for a rejection of a "narrowly manpower-orientated higher education system" and "a call for widening access to higher education."
What does seem clear is that in response to these and other significant issues, structures were created or evolved to address them. Silver's (1989) account of developments in higher education provides a useful chronology here.

Throughout, Silver argues that the creation of a 'public sector' higher education in Britain during the 1960s was in the main down to a fear of Britain being left behind in the post war world. Shattock (1983, p.200) however saw this same movement as part of a process of replacing "the hierarchy of institutions (with) a system where institutions are distinguished by function rather than prestige or abstract perceptions of status." Silver (1989, p.200) suggests that these issues had been "rumbling on" since the late 1940s and had encompassed not only the autonomy of the institutions but, by extension, the autonomy of their staff, even one might argue, the autonomy of thoughts and ideas themselves. Silver sees the Robbins report in 1963 and the creation of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) in 1964, as a body to approve HEIs to deliver their courses, as milestones in the development of a higher education sector which would have a change in focus towards serving the economic needs of the country and of being responsible and accountable to the state. It is possible to argue that the whole debate about the definition and policing of standards and thus the whole quality assurance movement could trace its origins back to that first meeting of the CNAA in 1964.

Silver characterizes the CNAA's approval visits as "pretty strict" (p.200) and presents the story of King Alfred's College, Winchester in 1973[11] as an illustration of the way in which the CNAA exerted its quality assurance role and worked to safeguard standards as it saw them. Moodie (1991, p.36) however sees this as not just a way of maintaining "the Gold Standard" but also as an example of the state's "marked distrust of the academic-as-teacher."

As stated previously key ideas keep re-emerging throughout the history of quality assurance within the higher education sector and 1985 saw the Lindop Committee raising another: this time the bureaucratic nature of quality assurance. The Lindop Committee had been set up by the then Secretary of State for Education, Keith Joseph, and was charged with looking at the "key issues for the effective and efficient maintenance and improvement of academic standards." (Silver, 1989, p.201). It concluded that the CNAA had produced a "ponderous and inflexible system in which form is disproportionate to substance." (Silver, 1989, p.213). This eloquently captures the continuing debate about the hoops academics feel that they have to jump through for what is now the QAA; the amount of additional work created; and the distraction caused by institutions that insist on putting on a show when the QAA auditors come to call. It is worth noting at this stage that Peter Williams, the Chief Executive of the QAA from 2002 - 2009 has referred to this in the forward to the 2006/07 Annual Review as "gold plating" (QAA, 2008, p.2) and during the summer of 2008 the QAA's officers used every opportunity at conferences to discourage the practice.

The Lindop Report's solution to this issue of over preparation and the disproportionate allocation of resources to quality assurance systems was to suggest that institutions under the CNAA's remit should be "encouraged to

[11] The University of Southampton validated the awards delivered by the College. Kings College Winchester was keen to offer a B.Ed. and a number of interdisciplinary B.A. awards but the University appeared less so. The College's alternative was for the CNAA to validate the institution and its awards. Initially the College failed to gain CNAA approval because of concerns over the comparability of the standards of such awards although it did succeed eventually after changes to quality assurance processes were made. The case was seen as breaking the established, elite system and heralding the rise of polytechnics offering non-standard awards to 'non-standard' students.

take responsibility for the maintenance and improvement of their own academic standards" by seeking their own awarding and validation powers in order to "foster rather than stifle the achievement of high standards in institutions." (Silver, 1989, p.215).

Barnett (1990) argues that we can see roots of the modern approach to assuring the quality of higher education in the 1986 Lindop inquiry and the government response to it. He argues that the government position that "the best safeguard of 'standards' lies in the maintenance of a coherent self-critical academic community" (p.100) gave birth to mechanisms that assumed that universities and the academic community in general had reached a level of maturity that would enable them to take on responsibility for this work and be accountable for the outcomes. Barnett (1990, p.100) sees this as a "reconceptualising of the academic community" away from a caricature of individual researchers entering academia in order to find the space to pursue their areas of interest free from interference, to a view of individual academics participating in a quality assurance process which is designed to safeguard standards across the sector. This move has occurred, Barnett argues, because the process being used in higher education "takes on more of the form of a consultation, aimed at course development, rather than a judgmental exercise" (Barnett, 1990, p.102). This has been achieved by including the academic community, through the use of peers on the Review Panels, including face-to-face dialogue between the panel and a subject team and by including panel members from the institution itself. This, argues Barnett,[12] is a step change that expects all staff within an institution to have an interest in the activities, progress and success of other departments – a new view of the academic community indeed.

However, as Eustace (1991) points out, the debate over standards remained to the fore. In 1986 the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) argued that if the sector was to expand, and the 'gold standard' of English higher education was to be maintained, then entry qualifications in the shape of A' level points had to rise and there needed to be an agreement amongst the new institutions over standards. Subsequently, in 1988, the CNAA, under

[12] See also Barnett (1994 and 1997) for discussions of the way in which Higher Education has changed its view of what it provides and its view of who it employs to provide it.

its new Chairman Sir Ron Dearing, moved to accredit institutions that could then validate their own courses, with the safeguard of an external examiner system to maintain quality standards across the sector. As a result certain polytechnics and colleges achieving these powers in 1989, a logical first step towards achieving University status, which then occurred in 1992 following the passage into statute of the Further and Higher Education Act.

Eustace (1991) agrees with Moodie (1991) in seeing the development of the CNAA as the state wanting to control standards rather than simply safeguard them. This they both see as a way of the state maintaining a hold over increasingly autonomous HEIs and what Eustace (1991, p.36) describes as a "state distrust of tertiary teachers." Slee (1989) disagrees. He argues that any "crisis in HE in the 1980s" was caused by a lack of consensus between "the need to safeguard the autonomy of knowledge, the needs of the state measured by demand for highly qualified manpower; and the needs of the individual." (p.63). This is a view that Evans (1999) also puts forward. He argues that there was a desperate need for some external benchmarks although they should be agreed by the academy and applied on its behalf.

Barnett (1992) takes this discussion further. He argues that what is required is leadership rather than management because "the assent of the academic community will always be necessary." (p.71). He sees the notion of maintaining academic quality is misleading; Institutional managers can:

> ...provide the right kind of conditions, incentives and assistance in order for academics to maintain the quality of their work. Through establishing and imposing guidelines, rewards and support systems and through the internal resourcing systems, they can have a positive effect on the quality of the work of the academics. (Barnett, 1992, p.72)

In this Barnett can perhaps be seen as prophesising the approach the QAA have taken with their Institutional Audit methodology.

Becher (1991) also argued that the state's need to control by imposition was doomed to failure. He argued that whilst variation in standards across the sector is "quite substantial" he saw this as inevitable. It is so, he argued,

because admissions policies vary so significantly between institutions that there can never be an equivalent baseline from which to judge the standards of the students' final achievements. Equally he argued that there is divergence between subject disciplines - "the hard-soft continuum and the pure-applied spectrum" (p.161) – which means that it is not possible to agree on what should be perceived as quality in, for example, Chemistry or Sociology, English or Biomedical Sciences. Add to this Becher's third factor, the level of research within a subject or an institution and the way that this affects the quality of teaching, and it is possible to understand his view that "the extent of excellence is a matter of subtle and relative judgement rather than for simple and absolute measurement." (Becher, 1991, p.162). For Becher then, the attempt to control standards was misguided at best and was always going to fail. The current position in higher education which can be characterized as autonomous institutions working with a framework called the Academic Infrastructure, which includes level descriptors and subject benchmark statements that were agreed by the sector and which are amended through consultation, is perhaps the logical and only solution. In this way the QAA, who maintain the Academic Infrastructure, are not the child of the CNAA and thus part of the problem, instead they are, it can be argued, part of the solution.

The Department of Education and Science (1991) White Paper *Higher Education: A New Framework* (Cm 1541) distinguished between quality audit and quality assessment. It proposed that quality audit should be concerned with "external scrutiny aimed at providing guarantees that institutions have suitable quality control mechanisms in place." Accordingly the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) was established in 1992. The HEQC, which can be seen as the precursor of the QAA, took forward the need to develop "the quality and standards of higher education to meet the present and future needs of students, industry, the professions and society at large." (HEQC, 1996) but did so by working with the institutions across the sector. The HEQC established a Quality Enhancement Group which in its 1995-96 leaflet described its role as finding examples of good practice which "have potential for generalization." Roger Brown, the Chief Executive of the HEQC

until 1998, oversaw changes to the quality assurance processes deployed in England. He argued (Brown, 1997, p.284) that such systems should not only be less bureaucratic, leading to less of a burden on institutions, but should "support institutions in responding to...challenges and illuminate institutions' success in doing so". Brown (2004, p.4) also reflected that self-regulation rather than state regulation was a key factor in any successful quality assurance system and that this needed to include not only the managers of the institution but its wider academic community. It was necessary, he argued to encourage academic staff to "take quality seriously by looking at what they offer their students and be both willing and able to improve it." This can be seen as the beginnings of the quality enhancement agenda which now dominates thinking and processes, and which is discussed further in the next section.

In 2006 in a speech to the Quality Strategy Network set up by the QAA, Sir David Watson (2006) argued that the movement away from state control and towards individual institutional autonomy needed to go further. He argued that the sector had been through a period of internecine warfare via a "series of popular revolts" (p.2). He saw the need for institutions to be more reflective, to look for a 'truth' about themselves and the quality of their provision and to stand firm against what Watson characterizes as an academically popularist "pathology" (p.6), that an engagement with Quality is by definition a betrayal and to be condemned. He also argued that "sectoral solidarity" (p.6), that is, the perhaps fanciful notion that all higher education institutions were engaged in a broadly similar pursuit and that there will be a degree of common identity and cooperation as a result, has been lost as groups such as the Russell Group, the 1994 Group, the University Alliance and the Million+ Group[13] have formed and this has been to the detriment of the sector and has led to a loss of international reputation. In this Watson is perhaps also reflecting a more hawkish view offered by Brown (2004, p.151) that the two key ways of safeguarding the quality of the student learning experience are by the use of

[13] see Universities UK website: http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/UKHESECTOR/Pages/OverviewSector.aspx#Q5 [accessed 15.06.11]

the market and competition and by the use of the institutions own mechanisms. The former would give students the information they required to make genuine choices and the latter would reinforce the drive to improve the quality of provision as part of the professional role of the academic. However Watson (2007) also argued that by the end of 2006 with the evolution of the QAA framework for Institutional Audit many of the factors needed "to put things right" were now in place: there is an effective external examiner system, an engagement with developments in learning, teaching and assessment, a relationship between research and teaching and at least some signs of a mutual respect emerging between the academy and the agents for quality assurance. These, it could be argued, are in themselves "empowering" for HEIs, especially when compared with the inspection regimes imposed on other sectors of education at the same time. This empowering conception of Quality is discussed more fully in the following chapter.

iv A focus on Quality enhancement

Having tried to set current debates regarding Quality into some kind of historical context I will now consider the position from the late 1990s onwards. In doing so I wish to suggest that these developments can be seen as examples of the way in which the tools used to implement Quality (Assurance) processes reflect hegemonic views of education and are therefore concerned with ideology and power.

Within the literature there is much discussion around the notion of quality and what this means to individual higher education institutions and their teaching staff. As Paul Ramsden, the then Chief Executive of the Higher Education Academy (HEA[14]) alludes to in his letter to the Times Higher Education (THE), 20 July 2007, there is a common perception that managers impose quality

[14] The HEA was founded in 2004 following the merger of the Institute for learning and teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE) and the learning and teaching Support Network (LTSN). The HEA website (www.heacademy.ac.uk) states that their mission is to provide support to the sector by working with individuals, subjects and institutions. It is funded by government grant and institutional subscription.

assurance regimes upon the teaching staff. Before taking up his post at the HEA in 2004 Ramsden (1998) had earlier rather poetically described this as:

> "...like the tolling of the bells of increased external control and a muffling of the song of academic freedom" (p.28)

and that:

> "The methods and concepts have been introduced in a way that runs against the tide of academic values and expression; partly it can be attributed to over-enthusiastic, top-down approaches to change which involve too little consultation and debate." (p.29)

Further, Clarke and Newman (1997) also argued that this is part of a larger accountability strategy and that these regimes add an additional and unnecessary workload to the staff concerned and distracts them from their primary occupations of teaching and research. Thus, they argue, rather than helping to improve teaching and learning such regimes actually have the opposite effect, since they take time and energy away from these key activities and divert them towards preparing for audit. Biesta (2009) also adds that the regimes are misguided, perhaps even lazy, since they measure that which is easily measurable. This may be of less importance if the conclusions of the measuring were irrelevant, but they are not, they change the nature of what it is to work in higher education. Biesta questions

> "...whether we are indeed measuring what we value, or whether we are just measuring what we can easily measure and thus end up valuing what we can measure" (p.35)

and concludes that

> "...discussions about education are dominated by measurement and comparisons of educational outcomes and...these measurements as such seem to direct much of educational policy and, through this, also much of educational practice." (p.43)

This seems to be a key to remember in the following discussion.

Underwood (2000) has argued that the whole British Higher Education system is over regulated: that institutions supplement the external examiner system with their own systems for reviewing and auditing programmes and departments, that professional bodies impose another layer of burden and

that this is finally added to by the need to adhere to and comply with the audit requirements of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). From 1995 until 2001 this happened through Subject Review, from 2002 until 2011 through institutional Audit and from 2012 it will happen through Institutional Review. It is worth remembering Barnett's (1992, p.121) note of caution when reflecting upon the construction and reliance placed on such systems: "No assumptions about the actual quality of work of an institution can be made from an inspection of its written procedures, however thoroughly worked out."

The language used by Underwood (2000, p.74) in support of her claim about such distortions is emotive: she quotes Howard Newby, the President of the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), as seeing English HEIs as "beleaguered" and David Triesman, General Secretary of the Association of University Teachers (AUT), who interprets the demands placed upon HEIs as "leaden control apparatus" which are restrictive and "spirit-breaking" and which "strip professionals of self regard." This is supported by Barnett's (2003, p.90) view that quality systems have "colonized" all aspects of life in higher education. In so doing, he argues, they have denied the academic community "room to maintain its own form of quality assurance" (p.92) and as such have shaped what it is to be a professional in higher education.

As an example it is worth looking at the actual instrument used to make the decisions, that Underwood is making reference to, and how these have changed over the years under consideration. According to the QAA Subject Review Handbook (2000) a central feature of QAA Subject Review was the allocation of a numerical score, called a graded profile, to six specific aspects of a subject's work. Four points were available to each feature thus making available to the reviewers a maximum of 24 points to allocate. The six areas were Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation; Teaching, Learning and Assessment; Student Progression and Achievement; Student Support and Guidance; Learning Resources; and Quality Management and Enhancement. The four points available to each area were based upon judgements that saw one point awarded when "The aims and/or objectives set by the subject

provider are not met; there are major shortcomings that must be rectified" (p.12) and four points awarded when "This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives. The aims set by the subject provider are met" (p.12). These aims were reiterated to Parliament in the QAA evidence to the (Dearing) Inquiry into Higher Education by the Education Sub Committee of the Education and Employment Committee of the House of Commons, 1997.

In much the same way as students react when they receive they work back, teams undergoing Subject Review were concerned to know what score they got; and just like their students the mark became more important than the comments in the report that went with it. Much of the work done on formative assessment (see Boud and Falchikov (2007) and Gibbs (2006)) and Assessment for Learning (see Black, 1998, 2002 and 2003) has shown that the use of numerical marks or grades lends a wholly unjustified quasi-objectivity to the assessment process, and this was also true of the allocation of scores in Subject Review. Such marks allowed others within and outside of an institution – for example the news media – to easily but falsely compare one subject and/or institution with another and thus to construct 'league tables' simply because the scale and scoring system used was the same across all institutions. However what was never consistent were the human agents implementing this scale and system, because, despite undergoing the same training, each subject review team was made up of different experts brought together for that specific review. As a consequence I would argue it was never truly possible to confidently compare one with another with the level of objectivity that is claimed. It was this inability to compare objectively, it can be argued, that helped the QAA decide to abandon the scoring system when it changed from Subject Review and introduced Institutional Audit in 2001. However by that stage the damage had been done. Anecdotal evidence suggests that academic staff felt that overall Subject Review did not judge them fairly; it required an unjustifiable additional bureaucratic workload; like all other quality assurance processes they felt it implicitly questioned their professionalism; and that their academic standing would be compromised by a 'poor' Subject Review score. Behind this is also lay a rejection of the

underlying notion that it is possible to easily compare 'products' such as a higher education subject in a simple and objective way.

In moving to a process called Institutional Audit in 2002 (revised in 2006 and 2009) the QAA hoped to shift attention away from the scores awarded to an institution and towards a system which Roger Brown (1997), the Chief Executive of the Higher Education Quality Council at the time, hoped would be less bureaucratic and would reduce the burden on institutions (p.272). Brown's hope was that

> "The new arrangements will, and should, be judged not by the scale of the demands they make on the institutions, but by the extent to which they support institutions in responding to these challenges, and illuminate institutions' success in doing so." (p.284).

Apart from the obvious move to considering the institution as a whole rather than its constituent subjects, another key change from Subject Review to Institutional Audit, which is crucial to this discussion, is the introduction of a focus on enhancing the quality of provision as well as assuring it. This was important for two main reasons: firstly the scores subjects received under the old system had, as indicated above, become so predominant that they distorted everything else. Alderman and Brown (2005) argued that the scoring system was leading institutions to consider legal redress because a poor subject review could lead to a diminishing of academic reputation and thus a potential loss of income. They therefore warned that the QAA would be held accountable by institutions for the outcomes of the new Institutional Audit process. The second reason was that the introduction of the idea of quality enhancement offered the opportunity of shifting the focus and changing the way in which the notion of academic quality was understood. Filippakou and Tapper (2008, p.91) characterised this as a move "away from auditing against a set of criteria to supporting development in ways which are most appropriate to the needs of the subject and its students." They argued that this would free academics from the demands of audit compliance but at the same time they sounded a note of caution. Their argument was that audit required subjects to show compliance but little more whereas enhancement was much more open-

ended and nebulous. As such there was a danger that academics would become so concerned with showing that they were enhancing provision that they became distracted from their key purposes of research and teaching. As such the QAA Institutional Audit process had the potential to damage the quality of provision rather than enhance it. This concern can be seen as an example of Foucaudian new managerialist techniques, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

The Quality Assurance Agency's 2006 *Handbook for Institutional Audit* described in some detail the concept of Quality Enhancement. The text within the handbook suggested a greater trust in institutions. The obvious immediate counter to this is firstly that any concept of empowerment that comes from a quasi-government agency is by its nature partial and contested, and that secondly any move to show a greater trust implies that there has been considerable distrust previously. It is also true that this handbook does not represent a complete reversal in the ways in which higher education operates. Despite threats in the Browne Review (2010) paragraph 6.1, the QAA has not been disbanded by the coalition government, instead it continues to audit institutions and make judgements. Similarly, institutions still divert valuable time in preparation for QAA visits and the media still takes the outcomes of these visits and constructs crude league tables from the results. However it is still possible to argue that the approach outlined in the 2006 Institutional Audit handbook has the potential to be far more emancipatory than other approaches to Academic Quality.

The QAA sets out its aim for the audit process at the very beginning of the handbook (2006 edition):

> Institutional audit is an evidence-based process carried out through peer review. It forms part of the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) established in 2002 following revisions to the UK's approach to external quality assurance. At the centre of the process is an emphasis on students and their learning. (para 2)

Following that, the QAA describe the audit process as an:

> effective means of enhancing the quality of their educational provision, particularly by building on information gained through monitoring, internal and external reviews, and feedback from stakeholders. (para 7)

One of the key foci for the audit process is now on the institution's approach to Quality Enhancement:

> In the revised institutional audit method, quality enhancement is defined as the process of taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of learning opportunities. (para 46)

The handbook puts quality enhancement alongside quality assurance in the overall "institutional quality management" system but this presents a problem. It is possible to argue that by so doing the QAA have merely devised another form of surveillance, albeit with a visibly softer edge. However this move could also be seen as a way of legitimising enhancement so that it is not sidelined and ignored by institutions preparing for audit. The QAA state that:

> Audit teams will consider the ways in which institutional-level approaches to quality enhancement make systematic use of management information. Such information may come from external examiners or advisers; from external bodies such as PSRBs and the Higher Education Academy; from students, graduates and employers, from the outcomes of internal review procedures; and from internal policies, such as may be part of the institution's learning and teaching strategy. Quality enhancement as defined here has, therefore, much to do with the way in which institutions collect, analyse and use information from internal and external sources. (para 48)

And that:

> Enhancement of learning opportunities also takes place by staff independently generating enhancement initiatives, but such routes to enhancement are associated with good people and their good ideas rather than necessarily with good institutional approaches to quality enhancement. Such routes may be better served by engagement with organisations such as the Higher Education Academy which are able to address matters of enhancement at several levels across an institution. Therefore, while recognising that the implementation of institutional approaches to quality enhancement will be demonstrated through individual examples of good practice in teaching, learning and assessment, audit teams will be less interested in particular examples of good practice, as such, than in the way that such good practice is brought about, recognised, supported and maintained by an ethos which expects and encourages the enhancement of learning opportunities. (para 49)

What is of interest here is the focus not on individual examples of good

practice but on the *systems and procedures* designed to identify those specific examples. Equally there is no set way provided of discovering examples of good practice, instead there is an implicit understanding that all HEIs operate differently and thus the means of enhancement are left to the institution to devise. The QAA are instead concerned with the use made of these discoveries to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. This suggests that power along with responsibility is placed firmly with the HEI. There is an expectation that an institution and its organisational structures will gather data from a range of sources in order to identify good practice: folded within that is the notion that good practice, especially in learning and teaching, is able to be identified through this seemingly scientific, quantitative process; how it does this is up to the institution. This, like much else within the process, is contentious. However it is possible to argue that the approach to quality enhancement included in the *Handbook for institution Audit* sends out a powerful signal. It signals that the QAA, with all that they represent, see the quality process as a means of improving the student learning experience and that they believe that the individual HEI is best placed to know how to achieve this. Whilst they expect this process to be systematic and data driven, they also see the end result not as a check on agreed standards and conformity but of improvement. The QAA are also not stating how this is achieved, instead they want to know how effective any given approach is in achieving its aims. They also state on their website that one of the outcomes of audit is to disseminate examples of good practice across the sector so that other institutions may benefit, thus setting an example for the sector to follow.

Therefore, depending upon your point of view, it is possible to see the ideas contained within and behind the QAA *Handbook for Institutional Audit* as a powerful government agency simply providing a bigger cage for HEIs to roam around within, but a cage none-the-less; or it can be seen as a shift towards seeing quality as a means of empowering and enabling institutions and teams within them to find the best way to improve the student experience, bearing in mind their own particular contexts. In this way the Institutional Audit's focus on enhancement sees quality as 'transformational', according to Harvey and Knight's (1996) typology and it aligns with Nixon's (1996) call to find a new

definition of what it is to be a professional working in the higher education sector.

In the August of 2009 a select committee of the House of Commons, the Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills (IUSS) committee, which scrutinised the work of the then Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), published its report of the 2008-09 session, entitled *Students and Universities*. Under the chairmanship of Phil Willis, M.P. the committee looked particularly at the role and efficiency of the QAA and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and made recommendations about their future. In chapter 5 of the report, which considered "Standards and Quality" the committee voiced concern over comparable standards across the higher education sector (paragraph 201). It was concerned that degrees in the same subject from different institutions operated using different standards. The chapter did not discuss whether the process of student learning was different nor whether different students in different institutions had different levels of access to knowledge (by being taught by a leader in a field for instance), instead the concern was on output rather than process. The implication of this was that, despite robust claims to the contrary from a number of Vice Chancellors who gave evidence to the committee, English higher education could not guarantee consistency of standards. It was feared that this would have a detrimental effect upon the recruitment of international students and thus on the economy. Alongside this the committee voiced concern over the QAA's ability to assure standards (paragraph 208), seeing the organisation as "complacent" (paragraph 216) and guilty of not "judging standards themselves" (paragraph 219) as part of Institutional Audit. Later, in a letter to the Times Higher Education, the Chair of the committee (Willis, 2009) wondered aloud whether the QAA were maybe "not up to the job" (letter to THE, 29 October – 4 November 2009) As a result of these concerns the committee called for a radical rethink of the way the QAA operated or called for its abolition and replacement (paragraph 220, 226). The government response to the report in October 2009 defended the QAA and refused to consider its abolition but acknowledged that it was timely for the Institutional Audit methodology to be reviewed. A press release on November 19th 2009

by the new Chief Executive, Anthony McClaran, stated that he saw the QAA in the future as being about "assuring quality and helping institutions to assure quality and standards in higher education". This suggests that the select committees concerns had been considered and would be acted upon

In November 2009 Lord Mandelson, the Secretary of State at the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) launched what was called a framework for higher education entitled *Higher Ambitions*. Part of this framework can be seen as a response to the IUSS report. In calling for universities to provide students and their families with a greater amount of what is termed "contextual data" the government was seen as signalling that higher education institutions needed to provide more information about areas such as contact time and employment prospects for graduates. This can be seen as a way of enabling individuals and bodies such as the QAA to make judgements about the comparative success and effectiveness of a programme of student and the institution that offers it. Anthony McClaran, the Chief executive of the QAA accepted this approach and declared in a press release on the same day as the publication of the Review that the QAA's future will be based around providing "clear and accessible information" (QAA, 2009).

In December 2009 the QAA launched a year long consultation on *"Future arrangements for quality assurance in England and Northern Ireland"* (QAA 2009/47). This document set out the thinking of the QAA and asked for feedback from the sector. This, alongside a parallel consultation on the future shape of the Academic infrastructure, produced the latest QAA proposal for a process called Institutional Review, which replaced Institutional Audit from the beginning of the 2011/12 academic year. According to the QAA website[15] the new institutional Review process aims to "better safeguard quality and standards in higher education in England and Northern Ireland; to help improve students' experience of higher education; and to allow us to look into

[15] See http://www.qaa.ac.uk/news/consultation/OD_Summary2010.pdf accessed 20.03.11

public concerns about quality and standards in higher education quickly and efficiently."

The new QAA review method will have four key elements: a "rolling cycle" of reviews rather than the fixed term in the previous audit method; a judgment on the information institutions make available to the public; a judgment on academic standards and the way institutions meet students' expectations and enhance their learning opportunities; and a requirement that after a review all institutions will draw up and publish an action plan detailing how they intend to address areas identified as needing improvement. The fact that the new review process will make a judgment on the way in which institutions work to enhance the quality of provision rather than simply commenting upon this, as before, is significant. The new QAA Institutional Review Handbook (2011, p.19) confirms that the QAA reviewers will work with the definition of quality enhancement established in 2006, but the judgment will be based upon the ways in which the "deliberate steps" a university must take to "improve the quality of learning opportunities" now "stem from a high-level awareness and (are) embedded throughout the institution." This is an important development since it shifts the emphasis away from individual academics working in isolation to improve the experience for their own students towards an institutional approach that is given a strategic importance by those in control. For some this may seem a further example of disempowering the academic while for others it may be seen as giving the enhancement agenda greater importance.

These developments can be seen as emerging directly out of the concerns raised by the DIUS and BIS publications described above. In some ways the developments are reassuring since they continue with the notion of quality enhancement articulated in 2006 but in other ways they can be seen as an example of what Morley (2003, p.6) described as "a moral panic over standards". There are two key elements in the Institutional Audit (now Review) methodology that are worth dwelling on: one is the idea of 'continuous improvement' and the second is the relatively new way of presenting information about an individual institution and its provision to those outside of the education sector – often referred to as ' the general public'. Continuous improvement has been a phrase that has been used by the QAA since the

2006 edition of the Handbook for Institutional Audit and it is often seen as a key plank of the more specifically defined notion of quality enhancement. The QAA see this as a common sense notion of trying to make things better and as such do not define what they mean exactly, instead they define Quality Enhancement ("the process of taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of learning opportunities" para 48, 2009 edition) since this is more specific and thus less common sense. However Morley argues that continuous improvement is something quite different and more threatening. Her argument is that behind the notion of *continuous* improvement is the idea that there is no end point, no time when the academic can argue that the work is completed. As such she sees continuous improvement as a form of Foucaudian surveillance and what she describes as "capillary power" (2003, p.13) because having no end point means that there is always more to be done and academics are therefore "always on their toes" (Morley, 2003, p.13). She describes this as both a kind of 'original sin' and an example of "steering from a distance" (Morley, 2003, p.14). Here academics are seen as paying for something they themselves may not have done but have instead inherited. The 'sin' - if there is one - is of being seen by those currently in control of policy as having had too much autonomy in the past. Current generations of academics may be mistrusted and supervised as a result, but according to Morley's thinking the acceptance of a continuous improvement agenda in higher education means that they undertake this supervision themselves, modifying their behaviour without being asked to. This makes it more not less insidious. There is an alternative way of conceiving of continuous improvement though which is bound up with the idea of a reflective practitioner. In this way of seeing the world the academic tries to change or adapt their practice to take account of new and emerging situations and contexts. If higher education is a "supercomplex" environment as Barnett (2000) argues then it seems likely that there will always be a need to reflect and change in order to meet the demands of this new world. This notion of continuous improvement is therefore not about surveillance; it is a positive rather than negative conception where professionals genuinely want to make things better for themselves and their students and engage in this in full knowledge of the fact that any changes will need to be reflected upon again

and perhaps changed. The key though is that such reflection is voluntary; it is not part of institutional processes and thus not a requirement. Any attempt to make formal this way of thinking about continuous improvement immediately nullifies it and it reverts to Morley's idea of surveillance.

The second key idea in the Institutional Audit and new Review process that is worth considering is the idea of presenting information about an institution and its programmes to a wider audience, usually described as 'the general public'. The QAA consultation on the future arrangements for quality assurance in England and Northern Ireland (QAA 2009/47) foregrounds the need to "provide timely and readily accessible public information, on a consistent and comparable basis, on the quality and standards of the educational provision..." (para 32ai) within institutions in order to enable comparisons across the higher education sector (para 38c and d). The type of information suggested is considered in general term and is then amplified in a later QAA consultation document on public information about higher education (QAA 2010/31). This document suggests the "key information set" is provided at a programme or course level and could include student satisfaction information using the national Student Survey, cost of accommodation, number of expected taught hours per week, range of teaching and assessment methods, typical destination of graduates and average salary of graduates in the first year after completing their studies. The QAA argue this will enable potential students and their families to make better-informed choices but Morley (2003, p.14) would interpret this as an example of "steering from a distance". For Morley what such requirements do is illustrate how far higher education has become "overtly tied in to the national economic interests while giving the appearance of site-based and/or individual autonomy" (Morley, 2003, p.14) and has been reduced to "modernist boundaries and classifications" (p.46) because such developments deny the diversity and complexity of institutions and instead see them all as strategic, corporate monoliths rather than self-governed communities of scholars and thus comparable using simplistic measures that encourage superficial judgements to be made about the relative status of very different higher education institutions. This Morley considers terms such as enhancement and improvement to be part of an accountability movement, the aim of which is to exert power and to control

whilst at the same time offering up the illusion of support for the democratising of (higher) education:

"Quality assessment, accountability and the auditing of academic work have had a profound impact on reconstructing academic conditions of work and academic identities. The academic habitus has been challenged. Academics have to be simultaneously self-managing and manageable workers who are able to make themselves auditable within prescribed taxonomies of effectiveness." (p.67)

To conclude, this chapter has argued that the systems established to assure the quality of the educational experience of students in whatever sector of education are based on an political ideology. The systems have changed over time and with them perhaps the ideology. In higher education the movement has been away from quality assurance and towards quality improvement. Whether this is a positive move or merely a rebranding of existing ways of treating higher education institutions and those who work within them will depend upon the specific political and ideological lens through which these moves are viewed. The latest consultation by the QAA, on changes to the Academic Infrastructure (December 2010) closed on 1st March 2011. This proposes defining the Academic Infrastructure using the notions of "threshold academic standards" and "academic quality" (p.5) and highlights the importance of quality enhancement in any new process. This could be seen as a move away from a strict and narrow audit mentality and towards an understanding of the academic as responsible for the development of their provision for their students, or it could be seen as disguising a reduction in academic autonomy and identity through what appears to be the laudable goal of the greater democratisation of higher education.

Chapter 4. Research Methods

i. Introduction.

This chapter will seek to place and justify my particular research project within its appropriate domain. It will then explore the two key forms of data collection used in the research namely semi-structured interviews with individuals and what will be termed "institutional micro cases" rather than case studies, in order to differentiate them from the specific research method of the same name. The chapter will then discuss the reasons why these methods were most suitable for the task to hand.

ii. What this research does not claim to be.

It is important to state from the outset that this is not an ethnographic study: it does not utilise many of the key investigative tools used in such studies; I have not been a participant observer; I have not undertaken direct observation of the research subjects in their familiar surroundings; and I have not kept a field diary.

However my research does contain some shared characteristics that are familiar to those undertaking ethnographic studies. Through working with the people I have interviewed I believe that I have been involved with what Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.1) describe as "living with a group of people for extended periods". I have worked and "lived" within the same educational institution for the past eight years and in that time have met and worked with all of the actors in my research in one capacity or another. I therefore want to argue that since I am concerned with their professional lives, the views they hold and decisions that they make in that capacity, then this at least in part fulfils Hammersley and Atkinson's definition. My role within my institution also means that I also fulfil a second criterion set down by Hammersley and Atkinson, in that I

> (participate) ...in their lives, watch what happens, listen to what is said and ask questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry. (p.3)

I also believe that this research has enabled me to fulfil at least one criterion of "practitioner research" as defined by Anderson (2002, p.22) in that I have engaged in work which has "(helped) reader-practitioners...reflect on and improve (their) practices."

However the degree to which my work constitutes Insider Research is more contentious. Chavez (2008, p.474) argues that insider researchers "hold a biased position that (complicates) their ability to observe and interpret" and that this is because this particular type of researcher is affected by "their various identities and positionalities" perhaps more than others. In Chavez's typology my work would be seen as that of a "partial insider" (2008, p.475), that is a researcher who shares either a single or multiple identities with the community being researched but who also maintains a level of distance and thus detachment from that community. Merriam et al (2001, p.412) also produces a typology which is adapted from Banks (1998) and here I think my work would place me as the "indigenous-outsider", that is someone who "has experienced high levels of cultural assimilation into an outsider or oppositional culture." Both definitions share the conception of someone who is both in and out of the group under scrutiny and I would argue that my work fits, at least to some extent, into both of these definitions: although at heart I see myself as a teacher, I have also become a manager, a constructor of policy and regulation and an advocate for a quality agenda that is easily misinterpreted as being restrictive and even oppressive.

Although I did not undertake any direct observation of the "community" being observed my interviewing could be seen as direct engagement and I would certainly want to see myself as someone who has been able to negotiate an insider status, which, as Merriam (2001, p.406) describes, means "access will be granted, meanings shared and validity of findings assured".
However I do not claim to be, nor was I seen by the interviewees, as exactly the same as the community being researched. In that sense I was able to observe and interpret in a way that Chavez suggests is difficult for the insider researcher. I want to argue that in my contact with the community, through my interviewing, there were three levels of separation. Firstly, through the use of

an information sheet, all of the interviewees knew that I was researching the topic being discussed and was doing so for a specific reason. In this sense the encounters were staged and artificial. This in itself lent a degree of separation that would not necessarily be true of what Chavez (2008, p.476) describes as the "indigenous-insider" – a term adapted from Banks (1998). Secondly the subject under discussion during the interviews was at my instigation, not theirs. I would argue that the issue of good practice in learning and teaching as approached in the interviews was not a topic that would have been at the centre of the conversation in normal circumstances. The interviewees had prepared for the interviews and in so doing had formulated their views and this preparation was again another degree of separation. This also accords with Platt (1981), who sees the responsibility that the insider has for the research as marking them out as different from the norm, as far as the researcher/interviewee relationship is concerned. This must add to the degree of separation. Finally because I work in a part of my institution that is not immediately connected to the day-to-day lives of the interviewees and is associated with agendas not always at the forefront of their minds there was another degree of separation. At the same time I did gain access due to the work I have carried out previously, which has lent me some credibility amongst the community and I did, through the spaces facilitated by the semi-structured nature of the interviews, establish myself as having the same type of teaching background as the interviewees – and thus had understanding and credibility -. Overall then, the position I held already and the degrees of separation described enabled me to stand back from the responses given and to evaluate them in a relatively objective way.

Merriam et al (2001, p.411) argues that "positionality is...determined by where one stands in relation to 'the other'. More importantly, these positions can shift." Chavez (2008, p.476) also takes up this point, citing Naples (1996) in seeing the researcher's positionality as fluid rather than "fixed or static". This, Chavez argues, enables insider research to be in a literal and non-derogatory sense "more facile or effectual than outsider research." I certainly found this to be true in the interviews that I carried out. Over the time of the interviews it was clear that for some there was a degree of openness whilst for others

there were similar degrees of game-playing and defensiveness; some respondents seemed to present 'the party line' or what they thought I wanted to hear, whilst others were obviously thinking through issues as though for the first time and thus displayed a level of originality that came from that process. Platt (1981, p.77) evaluates this same experience as being concerned with the "history and perceived characteristics" that both interviewee and researcher hold about each other and that this helps to "construct a conception of what the interview is meant to be about, and thus affects the content of what is said". I want to argue that these positions were changing throughout my interviews, they were not static; and it is this that marks out insider research in general, and my research in particular. The issue of insider research is addressed again in this thesis in chapter 6 where the limitations of the research are discussed.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.10) talk of ethnography as concerned with investigating the ways in which people "(construct) the social world, both through their interpretations of it and through actions based on those interpretations." This strikes a chord both with me as a researcher and those that I have interviewed or have been otherwise involved with in this research project. Based upon the analysis of their views as articulated through the interviews I want to argue that all of those I have interviewed have used this process to articulate their view of the world of work and have also sought to define themselves as professionals. All of the interviewees identified themselves intimately with the views they expressed. None of the interviewees spoke theoretically or in the abstract; all anchored their views in their reality and their reality was in turn shaped by their experiences. I have seen it as my role to accurately capture these views and to seek to find the links and themes afterwards. In doing so I have tried to work where possible and appropriate "naturalistically" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.13): "Naturalists shared with positivists a commitment to producing accounts of factual matters that reflect the nature of the phenomena studied rather than the values or political commitments of the researcher."
I have sought to be objective but because I have not been concerned with facts in the way implied above then it is unclear whether this has been

successful. This is because of the way in which the interview questions were phrased and the fact that they have been posed by a researcher with a specific role within the institution. Thus there has always been a suspicion that the interviewees may have been influenced by this role and responded in ways they felt were appropriate or in ways they thought the researcher wanted or expected.

This suspected reaction has come as something of a surprise to me. In my day-to-day contact with colleagues at work I have, until undertaking this research, assumed somewhat naively that there has been an open and honest exchange. In other words I have not assumed that colleagues have been simply telling me what they expected I wanted to hear. Scott (1996, p.155) argues that "ethnographers research themselves as they research their subject matter" and this seems to chime very closely with my own experiences. This act of research has helped form or crystallise ideas that had previously been somewhat nebulous but which have emerged from my career experiences. These include ideas around what is or isn't "good" practice; what it is to be a professional in today's education system, with all of the political implications attached to that; and the ways in which colleagues react to myself and each other dependent upon the specific context of an encounter and the role they assume is being played.

This research has, though, done more than attempt to accurately describe the opinions of those interviewed. As a second stage in the analysis I have also attempted to discover themes that link the various interviews together. In so doing I have attempted to create an overarching framework which better explains the interviews themselves. My aim has been to tie this analytical framework back into the theoretical ideas surrounding issues of professionalism and the role of the academic as described in chapter 3. Hammersley (1998, 1992, p.12) describes this as "theoretical description" in that there is a use of theory to describe events – whether knowingly or not – and a corresponding use of description to corroborate theory. Hammersley (1992, p.28) argues that "all descriptions are theoretical in the sense that they

involve concepts and are structured by theoretical assumptions". He states that there is a need to

> "...draw a distinction between explaining (in the sense of trying to show why a particular event or feature occurred) on the one hand, and what I shall call 'theorising' on the other. In theorising the aim is not to explain a particular event but to develop and test a theory, an interrelated set of propositions making claims of a conditionally universal kind about general classes of events." (1992, p.28)

Although I am aware that I have moved in a way as tentatively as Hammersley is implying, towards a number of general claims – in my case about the nature of what it is to be a professional in higher education – I am not confident that these can be seen as any kind of conditionally universal claim, because they are so context-specific and contain so many caveats. I would also want to take issue with Hammersley, at least in part, in my own case because I was not obviously aware of, or driven by, using any theoretical assumptions when constructing the questions I wanted to ask. This is not to deny my belief that all actions have a political and theoretical underpinning but it is to say that these were not consciously to the fore. I am however struck by Hammersley's (1992, p.13) notion that "the aim of ethnographic description is to present phenomena in new and revealing ways". Hammersley uses Hughes (1971, p.vi) to describe the way in which it is possible to see events in new ways: "(the) intensity of observations and a turning of the wheels (helps) to find a new combination of the old concepts, or even a new concept." This is something which I feel my research has shown to be true, at least for this piece of research in this particular context.

iii. What this research claims to be.

So if my research is not an ethnographic study in its truest sense, what is it? And where does it fit?

I want to argue that my work is a qualitative case study – or inquiry - as defined by Eisner (1998) and Merriam (1998). In this particular case I want to argue that my research is a qualitative case study of debates surrounding the enhancement of the quality of learning and teaching in a post-92 higher education institution. In doing so the "case" here also encompasses the rise of

managerialism and its absorption into the institutional culture together with the concomitant changing views of what it is to be a professional in an educational institution. Eisner (1998, p.200) argues that what he describes as "qualitative inquiry" allows the researcher and the reader to make generalisations, and these in turn "allow us to make predictions or at least have expectations about the future." I believe that my work has enabled me as researcher to unpack a key notion that is in operation within my institution, that of good practice in learning and teaching. Having undertaken the research I feel that I have also gathered at least some data that will enable me to reflect upon the views of others within the organisation. As a result I want to suggest that the institution will be able to engage in a real debate through which we may be able to learn and grow; as Eisner (1998, p.204) states "If we are unable to use what we learn, learning has no instrumental utility."

The key here though is debate. It is not my intention to use the conclusions from my work to impose solutions on either individuals or the institutional structures. The conclusions of my work are that all solutions must be able to fit in to the local context. Eisner (1998, p.204) warns against what he describes as "installation", that is the transfer of ideas and practices from one context to another without adaptation. I firmly endorse this and both ideas emerge independently from my primary research (see chapter 5).

Merriam (1998, p.27) states that qualitative case studies are specific and "bounded" and as such it is harder to generalise from the results. She identifies three key characteristics of such case studies as being "particularistic, descriptive and heuristic." They are concerned with a particular situation but she also argues that the particular reveals something about the more general. In so doing they "...illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon...they bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience or confirm what is known." I want to argue that my work attempts to do this because it does allow the researcher and the reader to understand the ways in which a managerialist and accountability ideology across the higher education sector connects with an individual institution and its staff. At the same time this research also demonstrates paradoxically that

the same drive my also work for the good and improve student learning experience through the same act (of identifying good practice).

Merriam (1998, p.138) also sees the qualitative case study as "examine(ing) a specific instance but illuminate(ing) a general problem" and by so doing attempting to "evaluate, summarize and conclude, thus increasing its potential applicability." I want to argue that my research shares these characteristics.

Finally I also want to argue that crucially my work adheres to another key characteristic of the qualitative case study that Merriam (1998, p.41) describes:

> The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon... Educational processes, problems and programs can be examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps improve practice.

This final phrase echoes Eisner's idea of "instrumental utility" and the importance I place on my research being used to open a debate that might make a positive contribution to improving the student learning experience within my particular institution.

I also want to argue that my work is closely aligned to what Hammersley (1992) describes as "subtle realism" (p.52) in that it is concerned with "knowledge as beliefs about whose validity we are reasonably confident" (p.50) and is concerned with engaging in an

> ...assessment of claims (which) must be based on judgements about plausibility and credibility; on the compatibility of the claim, or the evidence for it, with the assumptions about the world that we currently take to be beyond reasonable doubt; and/or on the likelihood of error, given the conditions in which the claim was made. (p.51)

Hammersley sees "subtle realism" as relying on "cultural assumptions" (p.52) which I take to mean the ways of thinking about the world that are held by a specific group and the beliefs that follow from that world view. He argues that subtle realism rejects the "notion that knowledge must be defined as beliefs whose validity is known with certainty" (p.52). I see the research I am concerned with as encompassing these ideas. I feel reasonably confident that there is good practice in learning and teaching but I do not think that we know

with certainty what that might look like and I have become convinced as a result of my research that the examples that specific groups identify as good practice are dependent upon that group's cultural assumptions or world view. I also think that whilst there may be similarities between these world views, they are not identical and that difference is important to the members of the group concerned. However my research is also concerned with finding the links between these world views, whether or not those individuals expressing views realise that there are links. In this I want to align myself with Marx's 1857 view expressed in the *Grundrisse*, that "society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand." (p.262)

iv. Methods of data collection.

Having described how this work has developed, I now turn to the ways in which the work was conducted. The two methods used for data collection were semi-structured interviews and institutional micro cases.

The primary method of data collection was the semi-structured interview. I decided upon this method, rather than others such as the distribution of questionnaires, primarily because I was concerned to gain a better understanding of the responses, opinions and reactions. I wanted to spend time with a smaller number of interviewees in order to gain a more complete idea of their views on the topic. I was content that the balance between a larger sample gained through completed questionnaires on the one hand and a smaller but more detailed set of responses was appropriate for the research topic I was concerned with. In taking this view I was dealing with the "interview data as resource" rather than "interview data as topic" (Rapley, 2004, p.18) in that I was concerned to collect the real opinions of the interviewees, or as Rapley (2004, p.18) states: "the interview data collected is seen as (more or less) reflecting the interviewees reality outside the interview."

Denscombe (1983, p.109) describes the advantages of interviews: being able to access views which are "balanced and representative" of the culture; providing what he describes as "hard data" (that is, notes or transcripts rather than numbers) in an economical way which adds credibility to the research; enabling the interviewee to give their version of events, in their own words and through the face-to-face contact, which provides the interviewee with a level of control over the process. My research has been conducted within my own institution through semi-structured interviews and I believe that it does make the most of these advantages. I conducted the interviews in the place of work of the interviewees, making this as natural as possible. They were 'staged' and one-off rather than impromptu and part of a longer-term process. They were thus, as Ball (1983, p.93) states "asymmetrical relationships".

The interviewees were chosen in such a way that the sample was both random and purposive; I feel it was therefore more organic. I initially asked the Chairs of the Learning and Teaching Committees in each faculty for suggestions of individuals I might talk to. These Chairs were asked mainly because of their role within the institution – and the belief that they would be aware of colleagues interested in discussing matters concerned with learning and teaching – and partly because of ease of access, since I work with this group constantly as part of my job at the University. On two occasions they suggested themselves but otherwise they suggested individuals I either did not know very well or had not worked with. In this sense the sample was relatively uncontrolled and random. I did make a deliberate attempt to ensure that all faculties were included – partly to create some level of parity and partly to help make any final conclusions relevant to as many areas of the institution as possible – although as was shown above this was not an even spread across the faculties. I also felt that there were key players in central departments that should be included and so these were specifically asked to participate. These aspects of the selection were very clearly purposive. During the interview process two of the interviewees suggested other colleagues I should speak to and so in this regard the list grew organically.

Each potential interviewee was contacted by email and asked if they wished to participate. They were also sent, as part of this initial contact, an information sheet which explained the topic to be researched and their role within it, which included the means by which I would seek to maintain their anonymity. It is worth noting at this point that although I have coded the interviewees and thus I have not identified them by name and I have not directly named the institution where the interviews took place, I have described the context for the interviews in chapter 1 and have coded the faculties and academic subject specialism the interviewees come from (see chapter 5). It is thus not possible in my view to claim total anonymity for the institution and as such may also not be possible to claim total anonymity for the individuals interviewed. Whilst this is an ethical dilemma I have struggled with I feel, finally, that it is important to know the spread of interviewees and their roles within the institution as these factors affect what they have to say. It is then a balance I am prepared to defend.

Although the participants had been identified and invited to take part in a relatively formal way, and had been given an information sheet to explain the aims and the process (as per the ethical clearance requirements of the School of Education), the interviews were designed to be more akin to conversations, thus justifying participation rather than carefully controlled questioning on my part. Kvale (1994, p.156) argues that such conversations see "data arise in an interpersonal relationship, co-authored and co-produced by the interviewer" and the interviewee. For Kvale (1994, p.159) this makes the interview "flexible, context-sensitive, and dependent on the personal interaction of the interviewer and interviewee." However this also obviously renders this method open to questions of reliability since it is possible that this information and method of setting up the interview context may have put the interviewees on their guard or at least in character or role. Again however I feel this compromise to be appropriate to the project's overall aims as encapsulated in the research questions. Kvale (1994, p.166) also makes the point that concerns over reliability stand as totems for a world view that considers it is possible to construct reliable qualitative experiments: "In postmodern culture,

the quest for universal knowledge is replaced by a focus on local knowledge, thus shifting from generalisation to contextualisation."

However, I was also concerned to make these interviews relevant, making the interviewees feel that the giving of their time had been worthwhile. Woods (1986, p.1) argues that

> To many teachers educational research appears irrelevant. They have little part in initiating and conducting the research. The issues selected for examination are not theirs. They are defined in ways that take little account of the day-to-day intricacies of the teacher's task, and are dressed up in methodological mystery and incomprehensible jargon.

Rapley (2004, p.19) argues that there is merit in what he describes as the "non-neutral" interview. In doing so he is agreeing with Fontana and Frey (1994, p.373), who argue that: "As we treat the other as human being, we can no longer remain objective, faceless interviewers, but become human beings and must disclose ourselves, learning about ourselves as we try to learn about the other."

Thus whilst I accept that I initiated the research and the issues for discussion were mine, I have been determined to describe the project in the information sheets given out in advance and to conduct the interviews in a way which has studiously avoided jargon. I have chosen the semi-structured interview as a research method precisely because I feel it has enabled me to understand what Woods describes as the "day-to-day intricacies" of life in higher education. In so doing I have also deliberately engaged in what Collins (1998, p.7) describes as being "...moved to contribute my own stories, to hold them up for contrast or comparison with those of the interviewee." I have thus tried to answer Woods' criticism and make the experience relevant to the participants – both interviewee and interviewer. This I see as a significant strength of my research, not least because it treats the interviewee as a person and not a subject and respects their professionalism.

I have been concerned to build up a level of trust with my interviewees and to give them the security of having some input and control over the process; firstly by asking them to volunteer to participate; secondly by sharing the

questions or prompts I intended to use and asking for amendments or alterations prior to the interview; and finally sharing my written notes and asking for confirmation that these accurately reflected the discussion and permission to use extracts in the research. All of this was an attempt to build up their confidence in the process and trust in the interviewer and to provide opportunities for them to feel comfortable enough to contribute more openly and honestly to the process. By doing so there was a deliberate attempt to make the interviews more "real", closer to what Woods (1986, p.62) describes as "ethnographic interviews". For Woods these are "...are of a rather special character, somewhat akin to participant observation...the same major attributes, revolving around trust, curiosity and unaffectedness, are required in interviewing as in other aspects of the research." (p.62)

According to the teachers that Woods interviewed the interviewer has to be:

> an understanding person, who I knew would be interested in me for myself (and not just a research project), and who would listen to and appreciate my points of view in a non-judgemental way, however weird, wicked, unreasonable or badly expressed they may seem. (Woods, 1986, p.62)

I feel that this aim has been at least in part successful. I am aware of the possibility of role-playing and acting in character on the part of the interviewees, which Rapley (2004, p.16) describes as "the person producing themselves." However overall I think they have been honest in their responses to my questions and have felt part of a discussion rather than a research subject. The resulting interviews have been illuminating and helpful and their analysis has revealed understandings and themes which can be seen as firmly grounded in the data collected (see appendix 4 and 8 for interview notes and recordings of interviews).

The second method of data collection has been the institutional micro case. I chose to undertake a single case study partly because, as stated in Flyvbjerg (2006, p.226), "more discoveries have arisen from intense observation than from statistics applied to large groups". It was also 'bounded and specific' and enables me to "optimize understanding" as Stake (2005, p.443) describes it. This is important because it allows me to test out one of the key research

questions which also seems to emerge from the data collection – whether it was possible for academic colleagues from different subject disciplines to share practice and to learn from one another. I was interested in gaining an in-depth account of one example of this type of practice and to see if there were lessons that could be learnt from this which would have been of use to others within the institution. Stake (2005, p.445) describes this as an "instrumental case study" because it "facilitates our understanding of something else". However my case study is also an example of Stake's "intrinsic case study" because "first and last, one wants a better understanding of this particular case" (2005, p.445).

Thus my case study was a way of investigating the extent to which disciplines and subjects can help or hinder the dissemination and transfer of identified examples of good practice in learning and teaching. Hammersley (1992) however, urges caution. He argues that whilst case studies may enable the collection of greater detail, by their very nature they inhibit the researcher from being able to triangulate the responses and thus to make generalisable statements in the way that surveys and questionnaires for instance can. This is refuted by Atkinson and Delamont (1985, p.39) who argue that case studies do not "eschew generalisation". As they go on to confidently state: "We are certainly not dealing only with a series of self-contained, one-off studies which bear no systematic relationship to each other" (Atkinson and Delamont, 1985, p.39).
As stated above, in looking for lessons that could be learnt and disseminated I was concerned to discover a level of generalisability and so I would want to endorse Atkinson and Delamont rather than Hammersley on this issue. I have thus been concerned not with "seeking the particular more than the ordinary" as Stake (2005, p.447) eloquently puts it but with seeking examples of the particular which, by being disseminating more widely, are made ordinary – by which I mean commonplace rather than devalued.

Hammersley (1992) and earlier, Atkinson and Delamont (1985, p.27) argue that a case study is not as controlled an environment as the experiment; they argue that "It rests on the belief that the innovation to be examined cannot be

treated simply as a set of objectives, or as a variable or variables to be measured."

In an experiment the researcher strictly controls all of the factors and the results can be repeated in order to demonstrate reliability and validity. However the case study cannot be repeated in a way which enables the researcher to claim complete reliability but it does stand a better chance of capturing an authentic voice and opinion. Authenticity has been a key driver for me in this research. My research is then, as Atkinson and Delamont (1985, p.29) describe, "the study of an instance in action." For this reason alone it was worth pursuing.

Ball (1983, p.91) considers case study research in education and supports this point of view, arguing that case studies are "situationally unique" and that "The result is not only an absence of standardisation in the interviewing, but indeed the production of a number of inter-personally unique elicitation events." Ball (1983, p.96) also states "The analysis of case-study data is essentially concerned with the process of interpretation. That is the translation of raw data into a coherent portrayal of an institution and of institutional processes."

This has been my aim and it is with this in mind that the following chapters, which explain and analyse the results of the interviews and institutional micro case, should be read.

Chapter 5. The collection and analysis of primary data.

i. Method.

Thirteen interviews were held during the period from November 2008 to March 2009 in order to attempt to answer the first three field questions linked to the first research question, namely:

1) Can academics identify good practice in their own areas? Does this happen?
2) Once identified is any good practice then disseminated to colleagues within their wider subject discipline?
3) Do academics think this dissemination has any discernable impact upon student learning?

As discussed in Chapter 4, the interviewees were chosen to try to provide a representation from across all five of the faculties within my institution and across the various levels of responsibility, from a lecturer new to the university through to the Dean of a faculty and including heads of department. I also tried to include individuals who might have had an interest in learning and teaching, such as national and local Teacher Fellows and Chairs of Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees. Twenty invitations to participate were initially sent out to staff by email accompanied by the participant information sheet and participant consent form approved by the Sheffield University School of Education Ethics Committee. As the interviews progressed other colleagues were mentioned by the interviewees and these leads were followed up with invitations to participate in the project. This was therefore neither a randomised sample nor a wholly purposive one, but was an attempt to gain, in an "organic" way, a rounded view from across the institution. The table below illustrates the spread across the interviewees, in relation to the (anonymised) faculties and central units in the University they are based in, the roles they undertake within the institution and the levels of experience they have. These are highlighted in green. The table supports my contention that a broad cross-section of faculties and roles were included in my interview sample. There is no doubt however that this is not a representative sample of teaching experience at my institution; or example, the sample only includes one new member of academic staff – and this appears to show that the sample is also "top heavy" in terms of representatives from the management of the institution. I would argue though that the roles that the interviewees

have is also at least in part a function of their experience and time working in the institution: the argument being that the longer an individual has worked in the institution the more likely they are to have a role in the management of provision.

Interview no.	Faculty	Central service	Chair of FLTC	Head of Dept	Teacher Fellow	National Teacher Fellow	Head of Studies	e-Learning	New staff	Dean
1	A		✓	✓						
2	C				✓			✓		
3	D			✓	✓	✓				
4	C		✓		✓					
5		F						✓		
6	E		✓				✓			
7	D				✓	✓				
8	B		✓	✓						
9		G		✓						
10	B			✓						
11	C							✓		
12	C									✓
13	C								✓	

Table 1. The spread of interviewees by location, roles and experience.

One major problem with this method of selection is that it was unlikely to include anyone who vehemently opposed the concept of identifying and sharing good practice in learning and teaching: the targeted nature of the initial invitations and the ability to de-select oneself made it unlikely that such dissent would materialise. As a consequence I also set out in my invitations to include at least one person who was known to disagree with this area of activity in general. I chose the person by asking my colleagues for suggestions. This was always bound to be "unscientific" at best and wholly compromised at worst; however I could think of no other way of identifying someone who would oppose the ideas I am concerned with, apart from a completely randomised selection and I did not feel this was possible given the

time and resource constraints I had. The interviewee was not told why they had been chosen and the interview was conducted using the same basic set of questions as all other interviews. As with some of the other interviews the questions were adjusted or augmented to take account of either the specialism of the individual or their management responsibilities. The interview concerned has been transcribed and appears as appendix 5. This was done because the outcome was not as expected and it has been important to assure myself that I did not lead the interviewee or set up expectations which were impossible to ignore.

Each interview lasted for approximately one hour and was conducted face-to-face. The interviewees were sent a series of general prompts in advance of the interview (see appendix 3) and these were used in a semi-structured way by the interviewer to shape the structure, to guide the interview process and to try to create some level of consistency across all of the interviews. However there was enough flexibility and latitude built into the interviews to allow for each to have it's own "flavour" and to go in the direction that seemed most appropriate and productive. This resulted in some interviews being more philosophical in nature and some being far more "operational". However each interview started with the same basic question "do you think it is possible to identify good practice in learning and teaching in your subject area?" in order to begin the discussion in a straightforward but clearly targeted way. The use of this opening question allowed for similarities and differences to emerge and helped to ensure that each interview also maintained the characteristics of both the subject and the individual being interviewed. This is seen as a positive aspect of the process.

The interviews were recorded using a digital audio tape recorder (see appendix 8) with the participant's approval. The recordings were used as an aide memoir for the interviewer rather than as a tool for transcription, except in the single case described above. During the interviews the interviewer took detailed notes and these were written up after the event and sent to the interviewee (see appendix 4). The interviewee was asked to confirm that the notes accurately represented the interview. They were also asked if they

wished to add or amend any of the notes. All interviewees replied that the notes were indeed accurate and one interviewee (I9) added some further notes to expand and clarify the point being made as opposed to altering or amending the notes taken. This process ensured that the process was as transparent as it was possible to make it and that participants felt that they were not being misrepresented in their views.

Following confirmation of the accuracy of the notes from all of the interviews it was important to attempt to categorise them as a first stage in trying to identify any themes that were emerging. Initially this first stage analysis took the structure of the interviews themselves as a framework and each interview was read through statement-by-statement and an alphabetical code assigned to each statement. Only when two or more statements were almost or completely identical was the same initial code used. This meant that across all eleven interviews some 99 separate categories were identified, coded from "a" through to "uuuu". From here it was possible for the researcher to group the statements together into larger categories and to assign a title or descriptor to each larger group using what can be seen as an inductive approach. I was keen to let the data speak for itself and in adopting this approach I was more able to adhere to the motivations behind the field and research questions. Both stages in this process were undertaken by me and are thus prone to my own subjectivity and bias, based upon my positionality as described previously in chapter 1. However the categories have been shown to colleagues and to my supervisor and there is agreement that the work done appears to be free of overt bias or any attempt to try and make the evidence collected fit in with the latent assumptions posited at the beginning of the exercise.

Following this level of analysis a second stage was undertaken which attempted to identify and analyse emerging themes from the responses of the interviewees.

ii. Stage 1 analysis – using the structure of the interviews.

From the initial 99 assigned categories a final set of 23 larger categories were formed. These larger categories were themselves organised under the set of headings approximating to the general questions being asked or the topic being discussed. Table 2 below identifies the statement made in an interview by an interviewee (column 3), shows the initial coding (column 1) and the larger category these were then assigned to (column 2)

1	2	3
code	Section (re-coding)	**theme description**
		is it possible to identify good practice in your subject area?
		Definitions of good practice
	1. Student focused	
c	1.1	depends upon student mix (context)
nn	1.2	relationship between tutor and learner
xx	1.3	facilitating understanding
	2. engaging the student	
LLL	2.1	enhancing the student (learning) experience
a	2.2	supporting individual students
qq	2.3	enabling students to grow
ww	2.4	tapping in to student experience
mmmm	2.5	need to be aware of students' previous ways of learning
rrr	2.6	active learning - "making students want to do things"
b	2.7	igniting a passion
dd	2.8	challenging students
cc	2.9	maximising student potential
gg	2.1	not just about getting students to pass
jjjj	2.11	positive (formal and informal) student feedback
	3. Subject expertise	
ooo	3.1	depends on subject context
e	3.2	staff need to be subject specialists
eeee	3.3	being up-to-date (in own subject specialism)
vv	3.4	integrating theory with practice
yyy	3.5	ways of working in line with (QAA) benchmark

		statement
f	3.6	subject specialism is reducing in importance
	4. general/other	
d	4.1	depends on link to employability
g	4.2	need to split good practice into categories
kkk	4.3	appropriate and effective practice
		Definitions of poor practice
	5. Pedagogy	
nnn	5.1	transmitting knowledge rather than enabling and engaging
LLLL	5.2	getting caught up in a specific way of thinking/acting
tttt	5.3	no willingness to help students
	6. Resources	
mmm	6.1	using technology (or other resources) as a life jacket
nnnn	6.2	innovation for its own sake
h	6.3	teachers don't make use of ready made resources (existing examples of GP)
		Ways of discovering good practice
	7. Informal (mainly internal)	
l	7.1	peer observation
j	7.2	left to team
ss	7.3	team teaching
	8. Formal (involving externals)	
ttt	8.1	moderation of exams (or other assessments)
kkkk	8.2	external examiner reports etc
	9. Other	
uu	9.1	over sustained period, not one-off
		How to share good practice?
	10. Informally	
rrrr	10.1	develop atmosphere of trust and mutual support
yy	10.2	staff "encouraged to engage"
bbbb	10.3	informal discussions amongst team
	11. Formally arranged events	
k	11.1	at specific staff development events
cccc	11.2	staff development sessions need to be directly relevant to need
jj	11.3	present ideas "neutrally' and hope others think it useful
oooo	11.4	at staff meetings (standing item on agenda)
zzz	11.5	through review of curriculum
	12. Networks	
hhhh	12.1	development of networks
www	12.2	teachers fellows (and NTFs)
uuu	12.3	pedagogic interest group

bbb	**12.4**	academic mentors act as critical friends and share GP
	13. Other	
aaaa	**13.1**	staff more willing to take practice from others in same discipline
uuuu	**13.2**	PGCertHE
		why identify good practice?
	14. Student focus	
o	**14.1**	to improve student achievement
p	**14.2**	to improve student experience
	15. Staff focus	
n	**15.1**	to change staff practice
q	**15.2**	to improve marking and feedback
r	**15.3**	so staff become more than subject specialists
m	**15.4**	to share practice outside of subject area
L	**15.5**	reduce staff workload
		can good practice be shared across subjects?
s	**16.1**	generic skills can be shared
t	**16.2**	if staff are willing to learn from other areas
u	**16.3**	not all staff are willing to learn from others
ii	**16.4**	only in some subject areas
pp	**16.5**	often needs specialist space
rr	**16.6**	requires trust
sss	**16.7**	can't mindlessly transfer good practice
xxx	**16.8**	context is vital - subject, faculty etc
vvv	**16.9**	further staff have to travel (mentally, physically, symbolically) less likelihood that sharing will occur
dddd	**16.10**	adoption of GP the hardest stage
ffff	**16.11**	sharing of GP doesn't happen as a matter of course
zz	**16.12**	some transfer of GP across modules esp re resources and approaches
aaa	**16.13**	some transfer of GP across different professions
ssss	**16.14**	having a PSRB can encourage sharing of GP
		why learn from others?
	17. Personal/internal	
qqq	**17.1**	to rethink practice
gggg	**17.2**	to improve practice
v	**17.3**	so own skills don't diminish
	18. External	
x	**18.1**	to keep up-to-date with legislation
mm	**18.2**	to assuage external (QAA) requirements
	19. Professional	
w	**19.1**	to meet changing student expectations
LL	**19.2**	to get the job done, increase efficiency

		(instrumental approach)
y	19.3	to escape own subject-specific paradigm
z	19.4	to change the conception of professionalism in HE
		effect of sharing good practice?
ccc	20.1	students more engaged
hhh	20.2	achievement is improved
iii	20.3	student expectations raised
jjj	20.4	students feel part of process of module
		other comments
	21. The nature of being an academic	
aa	21.1	staff work alone not across disciplines, doesn't encourage cross fertilisation
bb	21.2	staff need to see the benefit of working with others/across disciplines
eee	21.3	staff are receptive to other ideas
ee	21.4	need specific time to meet to share
ddd	21.5	need specific resources in order to share GP
kk	21.6	most academics don't like to "blow their own trumpet"
	22. Management issues	
ff	22.1	pressure to fill places not safeguard standards
hh	22.2	pressure to get students through not ask them to think
ppp	22.3	management need to support sharing of GP
pppp	22.4	need to stop staff existing in a vacuum (of own subject)
qqqq	22.5	need to create ethos of staff development and of sharing
	23. Other	
fff	23.1	new ideas shouldn't imply existing practice is poor
oo	23.2	tutor and learner need to see themselves as embarking on a joint act of learning/discovery
tt	23.3	helps recognise individuals and help career prospects
ggg	23.4	students say they like their tutors sharing GP
iiii	23.5	visions of the future

Table 2. Coding of issues from interviews

From the table it can be seen that I have been able to identify some nine "meta categories" after an analysis of the responses. These approximate to the questions asked during the interviews themselves. These meta categories are: Definitions of good practice; Definitions of practice which threatens educational standards and student learning; Ways of discovering good practice; How to share good practice; Why identify good practice; Can good

practice be shared across subjects; Why learn from others; Effect of sharing good practice; and Other comments which were not able to be categorised using the other statements. Table 3 below breaks down each meta-category into its still large but sub categories and indicates the number of separate statements that appear in each sub-category.

"Meta category"	Sub-categories	Total number of separate statements
Definitions of good practice	1. Student focussed	3
	2. Engaging the student	11
	3. Subject expertise	6
	4. General/other	3
Definitions of poor practice	5. Pedagogy	3
	6. Resources	3
Ways of discovering good practice	7. Informal (mainly internal)	3
	8. Formal (involving externals)	2
	9. Other	1
How to share good practice	10. Informally	3
	11. Formally arranged events	5
	12. Networks	4
	13. Other	2
Why identify good practice	14. Student focus	2
	15. Staff focus	5
Can good practice be shared across subjects	*16. miscellaneous*	14
Why learn from others	17. Personal/internal	3
	18. External	2
	19. Professional	4
Effect of sharing good practice	*20. miscellaneous*	4
Other comments	21. The nature of being an academic	6
	22. Management issues	5
	23. Other	5
	total	**99**

Table 3. Meta and sub-categories identified from the interviews

Finally it is worth considering where the greatest evidence of agreement across the 13 interviews appears. This can be achieved by identifying the sub-categories that most interviewees agreed with. Whilst the notes from the

interviews and the recordings do not indicate complete agreement, I want to argue that there is enough similarity in the responses for me to indicate that there is agreement. From this, table 4 shows the most frequent responses that emerged:

code	Section (re-coding)	Theme description	No. of interviewees who agreed with statement
		is it possible to identify good practice in your subject area?	13
		Definitions of good practice	
	1. Student focussed		
c	**1.1**	depends upon student mix (context)	8
	2. engaging the student		
LLL	**2.1**	enhancing the student (learning) experience	5
a	**2.2**	supporting individual students	5
qq	**2.3**	enabling students to grow	5
	3. Subject expertise		
e	**3.2**	staff need to be subject specialists	5
		How to share good practice?	
	11. Formally arranged events		
k	**11.1**	at specific staff development events	8
		can good practice be shared across subjects?	
s	**16.1**	generic skills can be shared	6
xxx	**16.8**	context is vital - subject, faculty etc	5
		other comments	
aa	**21.1**	staff work alone not across disciplines, doesn't encourage cross fertilisation	8
bb	**21.2**	staff need to see the benefit of working with others/across disciplines	6
ee	**21.4**	need specific time to meet to share	7

Table 4. Most frequent responses in interviews.

What is perhaps most surprisingly shown by this table is the spread of responses. Although 11 statements from 6 sub categories have been identified this represents agreement in only 11% of all of the statements and in 26% of the sub-categories. Although with such a small evidence base it would be naïve to expect to find evidence of significant agreement, the range

that emerged surprised me. The highest level of agreement was where eight of the thirteen interviewees (or 61.5%) were in agreement. This level of agreement only occurred on three statements. From this it might be argued that there are thus significant differences in perception. Because of the method of data collection I want to argue that it is not possible to go further and claim that this is evidence of a level of disagreement; this would have been possible if a questionnaire utilising a Likert scale for responses had been used, but is not possible using the semi-structured interviews used to collect data in this research.

However the data in Table 6 does lead to four propositions. Firstly it does seem to suggest that all interviewees agreed that they could identify good practice in their subject discipline. Secondly the table shows that although there was some variety in the way in which that good practice was described, of the 23 sub-categories identified in Table 5 there was some (and in one case, significant) agreement as to what those definitions of good practice hinged upon. Thirdly the table shows that there is considerable similarity in the main method used to share the good practice once it has been identified. Finally this table shows a level of agreement over the nature of the good practice that can be shared and equally a key barrier to sharing and thus transfer of good practice. The 'popularity' of the comments in the "other comments" section is misleading since this has been used to group together all comments that do not fit elsewhere: it is thus an artificial grouping from which it is impossible to draw conclusions at this stage.

iii. Analysis by "meta category" (Table 4).

In the analysis that follows the quotations that are used have been chosen to illustrate the specific point being made. The quotations are transcribed directly from the digital recording and/or from the notes that were taken contemporaneously and verified by the interviewee. They are thus not meant to be representative of all of the interviewees. However I have used quotations from all of the interviews in the following sections, even though the selection is not evenly spread. I would argue that this is entirely justifiable,

even inevitable. Consequently there are some interviewees who are quoted more often than others and there are two (I1 and I6) whose phrases I have used and developed because they seem to me to capture key concepts that emerge from the data – in just the way that grounded theory suggests will occur when rich data is collected.

The first question posed during the interviews was whether it was possible to identify examples of good practice in learning and teaching within their own subject area. All interviewees thought that it was possible; although this agreement was often a positive response to what, in retrospect, was a closed question. Whilst this does not detract from the level of agreement it does have a tendency to render the responses somewhat empty of any real meaning. As the interviews progressed there was an attempt to discover and explore this meaning. Interestingly two interviewees (I5 and I9) were more tentative than the rest.

> *"That's a tricky one isn't it? I can identify shit practice when I see it and that's only mirroring (good practice)" – I5*

Here we see what might be interpreted as a positive response only because the interviewee is accepting that it is, for them, possible to identify practice which is poor and thus logically it must be possible to identify practice which is other than poor, and this might then eventually be categorised as "good". There is some sense in this but this is not the same as positively claiming to be able to identify good practice. It is a different philosophy and is an example of the different perceptions described above.

> *"I think (identifying good practice) is fairly haphazard....What constitutes good practice is not shared by everybody...I think there is a huge amount of variety but you might hope to get an underpinning definition..." – I9*

Here the response is more positive but is foregrounding the contentious nature of the concept under discussion. It is possible to identify the use of "hope" in the final part of the quotation as a positive statement but this is by no means certain.

What also makes both of these statements of interest is that whilst both interviewees are on academic contracts, they have central roles within the university. As such they come into contact with a large number of different subject disciplines. This might mean that they are more able to have a wider perspective and this might in turn explain their tentative replies. Alternatively their central role may of necessity mean that they do not associate themselves closely with a specific academic discipline and as such do not share a specific allegiance to Becher & Trowler's (2001) notion of a "tribe".

a. Definitions of good practice.

The first meta category centres around the definitions of good practice given by the interviewees. Three sub-categories emerged: one which was *student focussed* – a view that the shape, content and delivery of the curriculum should all be based around the needs of the student and which used a reconsideration of pedagogy to engage the student in the learning process; one which centred on *subject expertise* – a view that it is the subject, and perhaps by extension the academic staff delivering that subject, who are central to any understanding of what is "good" practice; and a *general/other* "catch all" category.

The first sub-category, "Student focussed", brought one of the joint highest levels of agreement, with eight of the thirteen interviewees (or 61.5%) agreeing that good practice depended upon what was either seen as the "student mix" or more generally, the context within which the academic and the student were operating. This was described as

> *"Trying to understand what the students needs are and trying to build from that" – I8*

However the same interviewee also sounded several notes of caution that emphasised the notion of context:

> *"Not all students are the same...so a generic statement is an anathema in a way...to learning and teaching."*
> *"It is sensible to recognise that there is likely to be more than one form (of generic definition of good practice)...not all students are the same but groups of students will exhibit*

similarities to such an extent that if you can define what those are your attempt to describe good practice in learning and teaching applies to group A is "x" but group B may be something slightly different. So it may not be one generic...but it may be easier to think of...a handful of alternatives" – I8

This was reiterated by another interviewee:

"It's very much about the context of what you're trying to achieve."
"There is a possibility that you might have to take slightly different approaches with different students in terms of both teaching methods they are already used to and their level of educational achievement so far." – I10

Elsewhere the student-focussed definition of good practice emerged as being about the relationship between the tutor and the learner:

"(it's) all about establishing the relationship between tutor and learner and the way that you present yourself and the way you communicate to people and interact with people on an ongoing basis. – I3

or it was about the ability of the tutor to facilitate understanding:

"There are some general guidelines but teachers are very different and students are very different so there is a variety of practice...active learning, encouraging student participation...making students want to do things..." – I6

or it was about:

"...giving students skills, confidence, self-esteem, empowering them and giving them permission to value their own experiences." – I13

All three of these groups of statements suggest that good practice in learning and teaching has to be adaptable and relevant to a specific time and place and group of students. This, it could be argued, is the direct opposite of a content-led approach which could be characterised in three ways: creating a curriculum based upon the subject knowledge of those delivering it; teaching the same content time after time irrespective of who the students are; and teaching to the students the tutor wished they were teaching rather than the ones they were actually teaching. Whilst none of the interviewees were overt in rejecting this set of caricatures, the fact that they emphasised what might be seen as the opposite approach does suggest that their view of what was "good" practice was implicitly the former rather than the latter.

The second part of this sub-category concentrated on the notion of engaging the student in the learning process. This brought the second highest set of separate statements – eleven in total. Of these, three statements were described by four interviewees each; these were definitions of good practice in learning and teaching that revolved around the ideas of "enhancing the student (learning) experience", "supporting individual students" and "enabling students to grow". All three statements can be summed up by the following quotation from one interviewee:

> *"(Good practice might be) creating situations to encourage (and) stimulate students to learn independently and maximise their potential." – I2*

Nowhere were there specific techniques or approaches articulated by the interviewees but all but one interviewee argued that engaging the student was a key way in which they would want to judge good practice in learning and teaching. The next two responses that scored highly in this category – both being described by three interviewees – build upon the theme: "Active learning – making students want to do things" and " challenging students". All but one of the interviewees thus agree that starting from where the students are and focussing on their progress and achievement are key indicators of good practice in learning and teaching in higher education:

> *"(Good practice is where) you can see a genuine interest to help people learn." – I11*

However the next sub-category of *Definitions of good practice* presents perhaps an opposite view from the student focused, active learning paradigm – that of subject expertise. In this sub-category six statements all revolve around the idea that good practice in learning and teaching requires the tutor to be up-to-date in their specialism. Thus here the emphasis is on the tutor and not the student; responsibility for creating "good" sessions lies with the former. Interestingly for one interviewee the definition of good practice was to be working in line with the QAA benchmark statement for their subject. This idea of looking to externally created definitions may seem at odds with the view of the expert creating their own notion of what is "good". However it is worth remembering that the QAA benchmark statements originate and are

approved by the academic community concerned. The QAA website (www.qaa.ac.uk) describes the benchmark statements as setting out the

> *"... expectations about standards of degrees in a range of subject areas. They describe what gives a discipline its coherence and identity, and define what can be expected of a graduate in terms of the abilities and skills needed to develop understanding or competence in the subject...Subject benchmark statements do not represent a national curriculum in a subject area rather they allow for flexibility and innovation in programme design, within an overall conceptual framework established by an academic subject community."*

The process of creating and updating the benchmark statements may well be facilitated by the QAA but ownership of the concepts contained within them lies very firmly with the academic community they serve.

However even in this sub-category three of the interviewees who agreed that subject specialism is still important were also describing a change in the way good practice is viewed – away from the subject focus and towards the student, as described previously:

> *"Some people may think good practice is very up-to-date, innovative practice, but..." – I9*

> *"We tend to be a bit ghettoised in <subject> and tend to talk to other (specialists)...but we need to talk about your practice not your subject specialism...I think colleagues see themselves as (specialists)...although this is gradually changing." – I10*

> *"When I was at university I was lectured at...nobody supported me to understand my learning needs, my learning styles...now its much less so..." – I1*

This might suggest that there is a movement in the delivery of the curriculum in higher education towards a primary focus on the student and thus perhaps away from the subject. It is true that these are not mutually exclusive and to imply that they are would be to set up a false dichotomy. I would suggest that most if not all of the interviewees consider that the role of the academic is to combine a subject expertise with a focus on delivering to their students. Indeed it is possible to conceive of all of the definitions of practice in this category not as "good" but as the aims of teaching and learning more

generally and thus part of what academic staff do – or are expected to do - when they teach.

The final sub-category in this section covers those statements not brought together elsewhere. Here there was concern with the issue of employability together with the view that any definition of good practice had to be sub-divided because no overall statement or view was possible. However three interviewees agreed that good practice was really about "appropriate and effective practice" even if it was not possible to go any further and try to define what was appropriate or effective:

> *"Good practice has to be something which is appropriate, not necessarily cutting edge but effective." – I5*

This view then links back to where this sub-category began, with the student. Of the 23 statements which try to capture what good practice is, 16 are concerned with the student and ways of helping them to become better learners and thus to achieve. Even where there is still a claim for a subject specialism there seems also to be a recognition that this needs at the least to be tempered with a focus on the needs of the student. In other words the idea of being, as one interviewee put it, "lectured at" seems to out of favour, even frowned upon. This may of course be a condition of the institution in which the interviews were conducted. The characteristics of the institution have been described previously but the fact that it is a post-1992, recruiting university which is highly managed and driven by performance indicators, as opposed to, say, a Russell group, selecting institution where stereotypically research activity is seen as paramount, I would want to argue is bound to make a difference to the attitude most academic staff have to their students and their profession.

b. Definitions of practice which threatens educational standards and student learning.

The second meta category centres around the mirror image of the first: definitions of poor practice. Two sub-categories emerged: Pedagogy and Resources.

In the first of these sub-categories three separate interviewees suggested that poor practice in learning and teaching revolved around 'transmitting knowledge rather than enabling and engaging'. This was described by a second interviewee as thinking and acting in a way that remains static rather than evolving to meet the needs of students and by a third as having little willingness to help students. All of these are, not surprisingly, the opposite of the definitions of good practice discussed previously. It is interesting to note that only three interviewees out of the eleven suggested that a definition of poor practice was possible. Most interviewees did not want to suggest any such definition. This might suggest that they did not have a view of what constitutes poor practice, or, more likely in my opinion, they did not see this as a fruitful avenue of discussion.

The second sub-category of poor practice, "resources" was raised by four separate interviewees although only two of these discussed the same idea. All comments revolved around the idea of an over-reliance on resources at the expense, presumably, of a focus on the student. For these interviewees poor practice was where resources were used either because they were available or, worse, because they were new. In other words this type of poor practice did not take account of the students being taught and their needs and the overall objectives of the course:

> *"Innovation might not always be what is required: it depends upon the students' needs, their expectations and the course needs." – I10*

This conception of poor practice depicts the academic as being concerned with what is new rather than what is appropriate for a given context. In this depiction pedagogic criticality is replaced by an almost slavish need to use what is new. If this were to be even in the smallest part accurate then in my view it is indeed an example of "poor practice".

Overall from these first two meta-categories two key ideas emerge. The first is that good practice in learning and teaching, at least in the specific institutional context being discussed, revolves around finding ways of supporting the student to achieve. This student focus is at the expense of the second key

theme – that of the subject specialism; which is seen, at least for some interviewees, as having diminishing importance. What emerges then is a view of what it is to be a professional in a certain type of higher education institution, and that is of a leader and facilitator rather than an expert dispensing great knowledge: More like Mark Thackeray in Braithwaite's *To Sir, with Love* and less like Thomas Gradgrind in Dickens' *Hard Times.* This notion will be returned to later when the data collected from the interviews is analysed by theme.

c. Ways of discovering good practice.

Although there were three sub-categories and a total of six separate statements made in this section, the comments in effect centred on the "Informal" category where three statements were made. The informal methods identified by the interviewees were "peer observation", opportunities that were "left to the team" and "team teaching". Each was identified three times by a total of seven separate interviewees. At my institution peer observation is an institutional process which all academic members of staff are required to undertake annually as part of their "Academic Development Review". In this sense it is a formal rather than informal process but I interpret the grouping of peer observation as part of an informal process because it is not undertaken by the academic's line manager. Instead the individual brings the results of the observation to their review with their line manager as one of the pieces of evidence of their work. It is interesting to note that "Peer observation" was identified as a means of discovering good practice in learning and teaching by interviewees who all had management responsibilities and who thus saw and used the results of these peer observations. None of the three elaborated and none suggested that this was a major way of discovering good practice. "Team teaching" was also mentioned three times, however two of the interviewees concerned are National Teacher Fellows, which may in part explain their identification of this method because in my institution they are more likely to be asked to part of teams by their colleagues:

> *"There is a dynamic that comes out of that (team teaching) relationship which circumvents the formal process of attending*

courses...The things that did have an impact on my practice were when I team taught with <name> and we got together, we talked together, we bounced ideas off...it's in that relational context where, for me, it works best." – I7

"It probably is about time...however within <subject> there is lots of team teaching so there is more opportunity to observe others and to learn... Faculty away days and conferences don't really share practice (they disseminate project findings)." – I3

Thus in both examples a formal structure created for another purpose is used as an opportunity for staff development and to share good practice. The fact that the opportunities are made available for other reasons is then appropriated by the individuals and used in a way that is different from the original intention. This is a common method used by teachers and other such professions where the sharing of good practice is difficult to factor in to a formal timetable because of other quite understandable demands. However, the disadvantage of this situation is that it is prone to the vagaries of an individual commitments and their own enthusiasm.

The other two categories ("Formal" and "other") had statements from three separate individuals. Two of these suggested that good practice was identified through the formal moderation of examination scripts or the External Examiner process. These views are worth noting but are not corroborated by any other interviewee. It is interesting to note that both interviewees are in senior positions within the university meaning that they have the opportunity to attend these more formal meetings and are more likely to interact with external examiners as well as placing an importance on this process that might not be shared by other interviewees. This is of course conjecture: it was not part of the interview questions and would need to be followed up separately. However, the lack of corroboration from other interviewees might suggest that they don't see these formal processes as "learning opportunities" where good practice can be identified or that they are so formal that there is no opportunity for good practice to be discussed. For most interviewees the informal opportunity worked best, even where there may be some contention as to what divides the formal from the informal.

d. How to share good practice?

The four sub-categories in this meta-category covered informal and formal events, networks and the catch-all category "other". There were a total of thirteen separate statements across the four sub-categories and one statement was highlighted by eight interviewees, making it the joint highest statement. It is worth noting the connections and separations between this and the previous category. The interviewees seemed more willing to elaborate on this category as opposed to the previous one. This may seem unusual since there are obvious connections. Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that the previous category is concerned with discovering good practice whereas this category is concerned with methods of sharing good practice. The former is concerned with identifying what is "good" whereas the latter is concerned with its transmission. If, as has been argued throughout this work, definitions of good and bad practice are contested within higher education then it is perhaps understandable for academics to be more comfortable with a discussion of transmission rather than identification.

Interviewees cited formally arranged events as the most common way in which good practice was shared and eight interviewees identified staff development events arranged specifically for this purpose. This is not at all surprising and links to the statement about lack of time available to staff made by I3 above. In a pressured environment perhaps the most effective way of bringing people together is through formally arranged events. Perhaps equally unsurprising the one interviewee still completing their postgraduate teaching qualification cited that as the most efficient way of sharing good practice. However it is also worth remembering the statement by I7 above which indicates that the "formal process of attending courses" may be an efficient way of sharing good practice in terms of managing time but it might not be effective in terms of impact. It is this latter that is more likely to change ways of working and I would thus want to argue that the efficiency gained through this "formal process of attending courses" may not be as important as effectiveness.

Four separate interviewees considered informal events as the way in which they themselves shared good practice or encouraged it in others. These included informal discussions amongst colleagues, developing an atmosphere of trust and mutual support combined with an encouragement to share ideas.

> *"...you need a very trusting team...you need a team that works well together and will support each other, 'cos the worse thing that can happen is that someone gets exposed to ridicule... I think its much more tricky in a large group...you need everyone to be on board...and the more people you've got the more chance you've got of one of them...not playing the game." – I10*

The notion of "ridicule" described here is a way of describing the idea of embarrassment. It is a way of describing the need to create a supportive atmosphere where it is possible to take what the individual may consider an example of good practice to a group of peers and present it to them for their consideration. There is a risk attached to this – described here as "tricky" – because the reaction is not guaranteed and there is the possibility of ideas being dismissed, rejected or politely ignored. This may not be ridicule in a strict sense but it would be embarrassing and would probably lead to the individual feeling that they did not want to share their practice so openly in the future.

These statements link neatly with the other key idea that emerged from this meta-category, that of networks. The development of informal or semi formal networks was identified by five separate interviewees and covered such structures as pedagogic interest groups and, more formally, centrally organised groups of identified individuals such as the Teacher Fellows, who are appointed at least in part because they have shown themselves to be interested in the dissemination of good practice. They come together in order to disseminate their own practice and consider methods by which those ideas can reach a wider audience.

> *"...Teaching fellows are seen as people who are aware of good practice and people will approach them and I will try to encourage people to approach them." – I6*

The final idea in this section revolves around the idea of academic mentors acting as critical friends and sharing good practice through that role and the fact that academic staff were felt to be more willing to take and use practice from colleagues if they were from the same subject discipline. This links back to the comments made previously about the importance of the subject in higher education. So, whilst there is considerable talk throughout these interviews of sharing an interest in learning and teaching in a broad context, nonetheless the issue of the subject never quite leaves the discussion: it may not be the loudest voice in the interviews but it is there nonetheless.

e. Why identify good practice?

There are two sub-categories in this meta-category and a total of seven statements across them. There were no more than two interviewees who agreed with any one statement, which seems to suggest that there was less agreement across the topics discussed than elsewhere. It might also suggest that the interviewees had not really considered this idea. However it might also be that they were too polite to challenge what they might see as my role within the university. Again this might suggest the difficulties of the insider researcher, especially in my case when the subject under investigation is so closely associated with my "day job"

The first sub-category saw the reason to identify good practice in learning and teaching as having a student focus. The two interviewees concerned saw the identification of good practice as a means by which either the student learning experience or student achievement could be improved. One interviewee provided a concrete example of the identification of good practice which had led to an improvement in the student experience and, it was hoped, eventually, student achievement:

> *"I have evidence that some people have changed their practice as a result of some presentations (at Faculty Away Days). <Tutor> presented the Patchwork Assessment method and CCS staff have applied that and changed their assessment tools and assessment tasks as a consequence and not only has it got the students writing earlier and more confidently, its also*

stopped the problem of the CCS staff being able to do all their marking (on time)...That's a good practice example because it's a better experience for the students – its obviously supported their writing – but its also enabled staff to get their feedback and marks back within the University guidelines, which wasn't the case before they introduced the new assessment tool." – I1

What is also apparent here is that this change in practice is also concerned with members of academic staff being aware of their students' needs and adapting their practice accordingly. Thus any change is not simply a slavish response to the needs of the student but a considered response by a professional attempting to be more efficient and effective. In this respect there is thus a clear link with the next sub-category.

The second sub-category had a staff focus. There were only three separate interviewees who identified this sub-category but they all centred their comments on the idea of changing the practice of staff in some way. For one interviewee this was concerned with making staff more expert in a particular aspect of learning and teaching, whilst for another interviewee it was about reducing staff workload as well as improving the student experience:

"I think it's about the (staff) deciding whether they should adopt this (example of good practice). I think it depends (why)...they could perceive that something I'm talking about could save them time...or...it might enrich their students' learning activities...for me it is about 'is it going to save me time in the long term? ...and will the students like to do it like this?...but I also say 'is this going to save me hassle?'" – I2

Here it is useful to centre on the idea of enriching the student learning. What this suggests is that although it is possible, as I have done, to split these categories up, in reality they are best seen as two sides of the same coin: both are concerned with students and finding efficient and effective ways of delivering the curriculum to them. This, it could be argued, is the central drive of all good practice in teaching across HE and other sectors of education.

f. Can good practice be shared across subjects?

This meta-category provided fourteen separate statements from ten of the thirteen interviewees but it was not possible to identify enough commonality to create any sub-categories. This obviously shows the importance of the topic to the interviewees but also highlights the apparent lack of agreement.
The two statements that most interviewees agreed on – five each – were that "generic skills can be shared' and that "context is vital". These statements represent two sides of the same discussion: on the one hand interviewees are suggesting that once the generic ideas beneath any example of good practice are identified then it is possible to take these away and consider adapting and adopting them; on the other hand, for any adoption to be successful the ideas need to be recontextualised for the new situation. Thus, it does not seem as though it is possible to transfer ideas wholesale from one subject discipline to another; there does need to be a process of making it one's own. This idea is further explored in the "institutional micro case" at the end of this chapter and in the conclusions in chapter 6.

The next most frequently used statement in this section provided what for me was one of the key ideas to emerge from all of the interviews – the notion of travelling distance:

> *"If you look at any studies of travel people tend to travel long distances far less often than they travel short distances, so people are more likely to share (good practice) with the guy in the next office or the guy they share a module with because they meet them on a regular basis. Some staff will go out of their way to join...a pedagogical group which looks at learning and teaching...but you're more likely to share with people on the same corridor and it tends to be in the same department and you're more likely to team teach with those...the further you've got to travel and the more effort you've got to put in then the less likely it is to happen."*
> Q. "And that travel might be a mental journey or a metaphorical journey as much as a physical journey?"
> *"Indeed."*
> *"At a university level there is even further to travel and therefore less likelihood of participation. For this to be encouraged there has to be a focus and it has to be seen as relevant." – I6*

Although conceptualised in this way by only one interviewee, this concept of 'distance to travel' seems to encompass many of the other arguments that were raised during the interview process and as such it is worth considering these types of travel and the implication for the student and the institution. The interviewee saw physical distance as being significant, arguing that if staff development activities were arranged within the physical building where staff were located then they were more likely to attend. This could be due to pressure of time but it could also be that locating staff development in a subject or faculty-specific location also indicates that the session has been designed specifically for those academics and thus "buy-in" and participation is more likely.
Similarly if a staff development session is not publicised as being for a specific group or on a subject-specific topic then there is a greater mental distance to travel for staff to see its immediate relevance. This again, the interviewee seems to be arguing, is likely to affect participation. Finally if the session is run solely by colleagues outside of the academic's subject area or worse, their faculty – say, by a central university 'unit' – then this might seem even less relevant. Here staff from within the faculty known - and respected – by others would be needed for participation to increase.

All of the other statements in this meta-category were mentioned by only one or two separate interviewees and they can be brought together to form a narrative which suggests that "if good practice in learning and teaching is to be shared across subjects then it needs staff who are willing to learn from others" (I1, I3) and who therefore "trust others" (I3). There is also a recognition that "good practice can't be mindlessly transferred" (I6) or "as a matter of course" (I9), which enables the idea of contextualisation to re-emerge. Finally there is a feeling that although "some transfer of good practice might happen across modules" (I4, I12) the "adoption of good practice is the hardest stage" (I8). Overall then this can be interpreted as a narrative of some hope in the face of significant obstacles; it could be seen as academic staff facing an uphill struggle with perhaps a little optimism. However it could also be interpreted less generously. The use of the conditional "if" and the idea of being "willing" to learn might indicate some

level of resistance or even of a sense of coercion. Equally the idea of "mindless transfer" "as a matter of course" might also indicate a form of resistance with staff being prepared to consider other ideas only on their own terms.

Put together, the responses in this section might suggest a negative or at least circumspect response to the question posed. There is no outright rejection of the notion that good practice can be shared across similar or different subject disciplines but neither is there wholesale embracing of the concept. The responses in this section appear to demonstrate a resistance to what might be seen as external agents imposing ideas on the individual academic. This is thus a power play and a reiteration of Nixon's (1996, p.7) notion of "the professional as autonomous". In claiming the right to be autonomous Nixon and Strike (2007) also emphasise the right to individuality. These terms are loaded with meaning. It is my view that what both commentators are describing is a resistance to a form of bureaucratic standardisation and this is also what underlies resistance to the idea of "mindless transfer" described by a number of my interviewees (I6 and I9 in particular).

g. Why learn from others?

The three sub-categories here comprise nine statements overall, made by seven separate interviewees but none of the statements was made by more than three interviewees. This is not surprising in such a small data sample and may not necessarily indicate disagreement.

The motivation to learn from others seems to be concerned with improving one's own practice by reflecting upon or rethinking the ways of working. It also seems to be concerned with meeting the changing expectations of one's students and the expectations or demands of new legislation or external quality assurance requirements. Interestingly it also seems to be about a change in the nature of what it is to be a professional in higher education:

> *"People who are engaged will expect to learn something (from other subjects) and will allow themselves some space and some time to do that...there is still a hard core of people who don't think they can learn anything beyond their subject but they are a small number of people and increasingly...they will be*

marginalised...because the way things are developing...if you don't expose yourself to new experiences and what other people are doing then your skills become less and less and you are making yourself vulnerable."
"(this) does deprofessionalise them but it also gives them a wider set of skills and it also gives them the opportunity to engage in other things they previously wouldn't have had access to or been part of...professionalisation in HE was always subject based...(but) Richard Sennett says we can no longer dig deep, everything is superficial. In some senses it has to be because its just so complex...you've got to be able to grab things and run with them and also digging deep might be the wrong hole...there might be better holes elsewhere, and if you're concentrating all your energies digging one specific hole then you're missing the opportunities." – I1

This idea also relates to what the same interviewee elsewhere described as "multi-taskers, hybrid individuals." It is interesting to note the possible implications that can be taken from the language: there is a perception that the ways of working for academics in higher education are changing away from the tribal and towards the communal, even towards occupying Whitchurch's (2009) notion of a "third space" articulated at the end of chapter 2. This can be seen in the way in which those who are moving in this direction are seen as "engaged" whereas those who are not are described in terms such as "still a hard core of people" and "they will be marginalised". There is a clear advocacy of the former attitude here.

h. The effect of sharing good practice

There were four separate statements in this meta-category but no sub-categories, indicating perhaps no overall clear agreement of the effect sharing could have. The statements highlight the areas that might be expected: that students are more engaged; achievement is improved; student expectation is raised; and that students feel part of the process of the module they are studying. However only three separate interviewees responded to this section, which might indicate that most interviewees could not see any discernible effect on the students of sharing good practice. This might be because there is bound to be a time lag between staff picking up and adopting new ideas or techniques and any consequent effect upon the students. The three interviewees who did claim that there was an effect upon their students

pointed predominantly to greater student engagement and higher levels of student achievement. Together these form at least part of the 'Holy Grail' of teaching and as such, although only claimed by three (or 23%) interviewees, suggest that the act of sharing good practice should not be dismissed or sidelined: the prize is too great.

i. Other comments.

The final meta-category used in this analysis is a portmanteau category, used to collect together all of the individual statements which do not fit neatly elsewhere. Having said that, two key sub-categories still emerge: one concerned with the nature of what it is to be an academic in at least one higher education institution today and another concerned broadly with management issues.

Discussion about the nature of what it is to be an academic in a higher education institution raised one of the joint highest statements (8 respondents), that "staff work alone not across disciplines..." This was augmented by the view that "staff need specific time to meet to share" (7 respondents) and "staff need to see the benefit of working with others/across disciplines" (6 respondents). Together these statements paint a picture of a pressurised workforce who more often than not are unable to find time to learn about or share examples of good practice unless this is organised for them. This corresponds to the high level of agreement with statement 11.1, where eight separate interviewees stated that they only found out about other practice at formally organised staff development events. It also corresponds to the notion of distance-to-travel discussed above and raised by statement 16.9. In other words academic staff are making strategic decisions about the opportunity costs involved in finding out about other colleagues' practice. They need to see a direct link with their own work and need to be enabled to attend, presumably by those in management positions. They are thus behaving in a very utilitarian manner, almost as "strategic or surface learners", they are not, in the main, engaging in staff development opportunities altruistically, just because they are curious and want to explore ideas and

learn; they do not seem able to engage with the ideas of sharing good practice with purely pedagogic motives: like their students, everything has to be directly relevant and useful to their immediate situation.

> *"...it probably is about time...its also about finding the structures that exist (to meet) and its often very difficult to create those structures." – I3*

> *"In order to use good practice from elsewhere it is necessary to present information, for there to be a willingness to engage in discussion, a willingness to consider and adopt if necessary and appropriate." – I5*

This suggests that staff are doubtful about the potential of any benefit and are suggesting that there is no guaranteed return for their investment of time and so do not engage. Yet they may also know that to state such a view so overtly may not be politically astute, and so "blame" a lack of time.

However operating above and beyond the pressures of time and space is the fundamental issue of the nature of the academic. The statement that "staff work alone" encapsulates a key idea. Even if those in management positions were to facilitate times for colleagues to meet and discuss, the high level of agreement with this statement seems to suggest that there is a psychological barrier to overcome – that academics' self image is bound up with the idea of individuality and of isolation, perhaps indicated by the use of the term 'willingness" in the quotation above and articulated by another interviewee thus:

> *"Most of the time we work in little boxes and on our own...it doesn't promote cross fertilisation (of approaches and techniques)... I don't think (academics) overly share good practice... Time might be a problem, (but) I don't think all academics get on with each other, even in a team. The team ethic isn't necessarily consistent with being an academic." – I2*

What might also be said to emerge from this – although it was not stated overtly by any of the interviewees – is that the element that is important to the academic is allegiance to their subject. I would want to suggest that the academic has a one-to-one relationship with their discipline, and although they may work with colleagues in the same discipline what seems to emerge is a series of parallel one-to-one relationships rather than individuals coming

together to work cooperatively. Within my institution this may be compounded by the presence of a relatively small number of research communities. This may mean that the individual academic is less able to find and work with colleagues who share similar areas of research than in a more research-intensive institution. This would perhaps also help to explain the isolation described above. Add to this the notion of distance-to-travel and it soon seems inevitable that academics in at least this higher education institution will not set out, as a matter of course, to discover good practice in other academic disciplines. This seems to be an opportunity lost but one that seems to have an inevitability about it.

Five separate management issues were also raised in this final category, although only by four interviewees and in the main only by one. The key issue, that "management need to support the sharing of good practice," relates back to the notion of creating a specific time and space to share good practice discussed above. Here it seems that responsibility for creating the formal events that most interviewees found most convenient rests with the management of the programme, the department or the faculty. This is accompanied by another two statements in this category, that management "need to create an ethos of staff development and of sharing" and that they "need to stop staff existing in a vacuum". This responsibility is set into relief by the other two statements, that there is a "pressure to fill places" and to "get students through (their course)".
Overall then we see a vision of the individual academic under pressure from time pressures; and managers under equal pressure to change the ways their staff work and think. These are not in any way mutually compatible, indeed they seem destined to clash.

The final set of five statements is an eclectic mix that did not fit elsewhere. Two separate interviewees referred to the idea of learning being a joint enterprise both tutor and student are engaged on; all other statements were only spoken by one interviewee.

Tentative conclusions from this stage of analysis can be found in Chapter 5.

iv. Stage 2 analysis: Categorising the responses to the interviews by theme.

When the thirteen interviews with academic staff are reconsidered to identify key themes that seem to emerge across all of the interviews, there seem to be two dominant issues that emerge: the way in which academics view themselves as professionals and the ways in which this affects what they consider/categorise as good practice. Additionally there seem to be three specific foci: the student, the subject and staff.

When the 99 separate statements identified across the 13 interviews are allocated to the three categories of student, subject and staff (see appendix 7) there were 28 that demonstrated a student focus (of which 2 were shared with one other category), 28 had a subject focus (of which 6 were shared with one other category) and 47 had a staff focus (of which 8 were shared with one other category). Four statements do not fit into these themes. This therefore shows an overriding preoccupation with the nature of academic life in higher education. The ideas that emerged in relation to this were around the ways in which academics might identify or discover good practice; the ways in which they might then share this through the networks they were part of for example; a consideration of the usefulness (or not) of such an activity; and a contemplation on the work of an academic and the pressures they feel.

When the 99 separate statements identified across the 13 interviews are allocated to the three categories of student, subject and staff (see appendix 7) there were 28 that demonstrated a student focus (of which 2 were shared with one other category), 28 had a subject focus (of which 6 were shared with one other category) and 47 had a staff focus (of which 8 were shared with one other category). Four statements do not fit into these themes. The results of this categorisation were also compared with the frequency with which key words appeared in the interview notes by using a "Wordcloud" for each interview. Here the agreed notes from each interview were put through

software available on the web (www.wordle.net) and the frequency of words was displayed graphically, with the most frequent words being larger in size. The most frequent words were identified and a separate list of "high frequency words' was created. This was in turn put through the Wordle software to create a wordcloud of the most frequent words to appear across all of the interviews, thus:

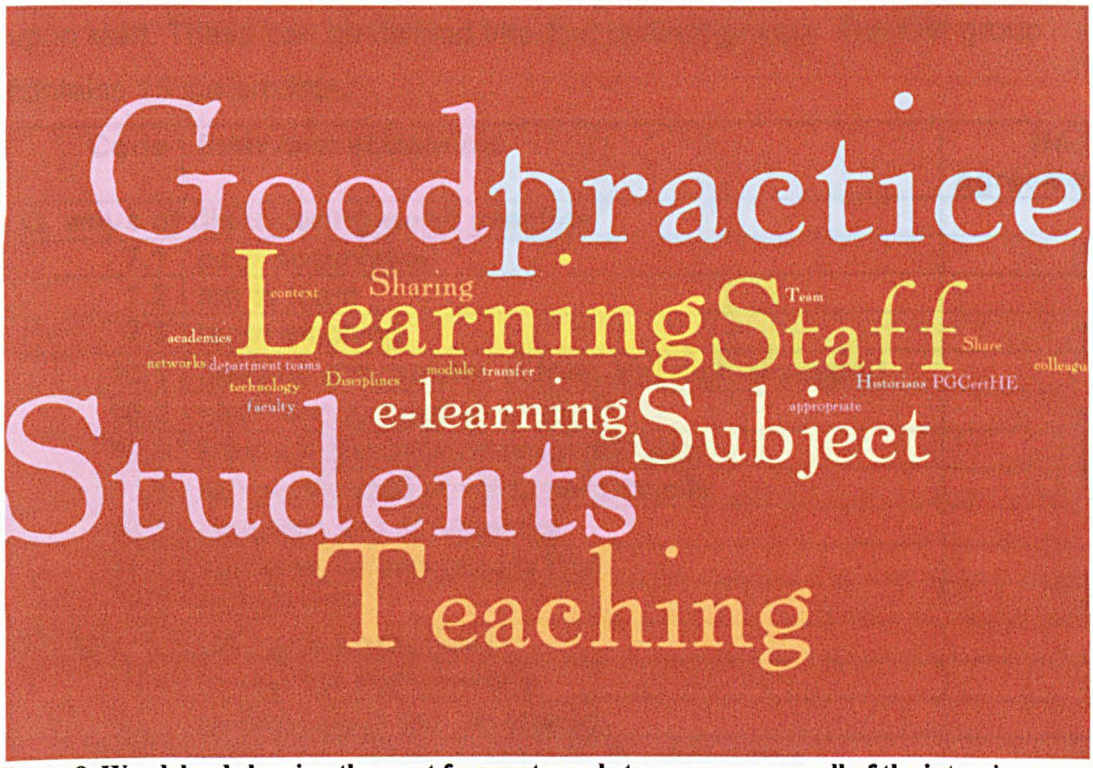

Figure 9. Wordcloud showing the most frequent words to appear across all of the interviews undertaken for this research.

This exercise graphically illustrates the point made above: an examination of the wordclouds generated for all 13 interviews (see appendix 5) demonstrated that the most frequently used words across the range of interviews – apart from "good practice" and "learning and teaching" which were the subjects for the interviews – are "staff", "subject" and "students".

There are very obvious shortfalls with this form of comparison, the main one, in this case, being that the comparison is with the notes of the meeting and not a transcript. Even though the notes had been agreed with the interviewee as an accurate record of the meeting, they are still one step removed from the original and are the interviewer's version of what was said rather than the interviewee's words verbatim. This means therefore that any conclusion needs to take these limitations into account. However despite these caveats I

would want to argue that overall there is a similar balance to the themes of student, subject and staff in the wordcloud as was discovered by categorising the statements.

a. Staff focus.

There are 32 statements that can be interpreted as having a focus primarily upon staff. These can be divided into four distinct groups. The first group contains 15 statements.

Code	Interview statement	No. in agreement
Q. ways of discovering good practice		
7.1	peer observation	**3**
7.2	left to team	**3**
7.3	team teaching	**3**
10.1	develop atmosphere of trust and mutual support	**1**
10.2	staff "encouraged to engage"	**1**
10.3	informal discussions amongst team	**3**
11.1	at specific staff development events	**8**
12.1	development of networks	**1**
12.2	teachers fellows (and NTFs)	**3**
13.2	PGCertHE	**1**
Q. Why identify good practice?		
15.1	to change staff practice	**2**
16.1	generic skills can be shared	**6**
16.2	if staff are willing to learn from other areas	**2**
Q. why learn from others?		
17.3	so own skills don't diminish	**3**
23.3	helps recognise individuals and help career prospects	**1**

Table 5. Interview statements with a staff focus

This group of statements suggests a motivation on the part of staff to improve both their own knowledge base and the way that they deliver this to students. There is a view that this may be linked to promotion in the longer term but these actions are perhaps not directly connected to advancement. Academics are thus not acting strategically; instead they may instead be seen as pursuing something for its own sake. By this I mean being interested in being the best that they can be. The reasons for this were not pursued as part of the primary research but it is possible to hypothesise that this way of working is an example of what might be termed a 'traditional' view of the academic, as discussed in chapter 2. Here the member of staff considers that as a member

of an academic community it is their role to further the development of their subject and to pass this on to their students. As such they consider themselves as both a learner and an expert who would strive to enable their students to obtain an improved learning experience and/or at the same time gain professional pride and perhaps eventual advancement. There is also a connection here with two other statements:

Code	Interview statement	No. in agreement
Q. can good practice be shared?		
16.3	not all staff are willing to learn from others	**1**
21.6	most academics don't like to "blow their own trumpet"	**1**

Table 6. Connections between two statements

Here the emphasis is on the academic working in isolation rather than as a member of a team. This again links back to not only the set of statements immediately above but also to the notion described previously, of the academic as the expert in their field. Here this is nuanced by seeing them as the lone expert.

Whether or not this view of the way in which academics work is true for the majority of people in the majority of situations, the perception persists and it is one that has a long history.

Another group of statements are in direct opposition to the ideas suggested immediately above:

Code	Interview statement	No. in agreement
Q. How to share good practice?		
11.2	staff development sessions need to be directly relevant to need	**3**
Q. Why identify good practice?		
15.5	reduce staff workload	**2**
Q. Can good practice be shared across subjects?		
16.9	further staff have to travel (mentally, physically, symbolically) less likelihood that sharing will occur	**3**
Q. Why learn from others?		
19.2	to get the job done, increase efficiency (instrumental approach)	**2**
Q. Any other comments?		

21.1	staff work alone not across disciplines, doesn't encourage cross fertilisation	**8**
21.2	staff need to see the benefit of working with others/across disciplines	**6**

Table 7. Statements in opposition to table 7&8

Here the suggestion seems to be that academic staff are acting in a strategic manner. In other words they are reluctant to act unless there is some kind of benefit to themselves. This may be interpreted in a number of ways: as an act of self-preservation in the face of increasing demands; as a selfish act which does not take into account the needs of the student; or perhaps as a sign of resistance to or criticism of those external demands that they feel are imposed upon them.

A third group of responses with a staff focus develops from the previous set of statements in that it seems to be concerned with ways in which academics have to respond to the demands made on them by managers at all levels within the institution:

Code	Interview statement	No. in agreement
Q. How to share good practice?		
11.4	at staff meetings (standing item on agenda)	**1**
11.5	through review of curriculum	**2**
Q. Why learn from others?		
18.2	to assuage external (QAA) requirements	**3**
Q. Any other comments?		
21.4	need specific time to meet to share	**7**
21.5	need specific resources in order to share GP	**2**
23.5	visions of the future	**1**

Table 8. Responses to managers.

This again illustrates an aspect of what it is to be a professional academic in a post-1992 university. This is a view of the academic as an employee; as someone whose role is bound up with taking forward the initiatives of the place of work rather than necessarily forwarding their own career. Almost by definition these initiatives are designed externally and imposed on the institution and then on to the individual academic. The primary research did not develop this theme directly and so the individual's attitudes towards these external agendas was not discussed specifically, however the need to contextualise, to make sense of initiatives to the individual subject might suggest that academics do not simply comply unquestioning with initiatives; in

making them their own they might be seen as demonstrating a form of passive resistance.

Similarly there are three statements that show that academic staff feel that their role as academics is concerned with responding to the demands of external agencies, including demands which arise following the introduction of new legislation:

Code	Interview statement	No. in agreement
Q. Ways of discovering good practice?		
8.1	moderation of exams (or other assessments)	**1**
8.2	external examiner reports etc	**1**
Q. Why learn from others?		
18.1	to keep up-to-date with legislation	**2**

Table 9. Academics responding to external agencies

As above this demonstrates the changing role of the academic and moves the role further away from the subject expertise that was shown to be the ideal that academics seem to hold on to. In this way the statements in this third group link back to the work of both Stephen Ball and Jon Nixon considered earlier in Chapters 2 and 3.

Ball (1990) argues that since education in general, and compulsory state education in particular, has evolved to become preoccupied with creating "a hierarchy of continuous and functional surveillance" (p.165) then this will have an effect upon what duties teachers are expected to carry out as part of their professional contract. Ball sees this as an attack on the professionalism of the teaching profession which has resulted in "...systems of administrative rationality that exclude (teachers) from an effective say in the kind of substantive decision-making that could equally well be determined collectively." (p.153). The teaching profession is thus effectively neutered. Nixon sees a similar attack upon professionalism in teaching in the higher education sector. He argues that academics in HE are "a profession divided against itself" (Nixon,1996, p.7). Elsewhere Nixon has characterised the change in the role of the academic as a change in the "business" of higher education and sees "the ideological takeover of (the private sector) through an insistence on the ethical...values of the non-profit making and public sectors." (2004, p.165). At its worst for Nixon this is a change in the professional role of

the academic, which he characterises as a change "from master craftsmen to merchants" (2004, p.166). Implicit within this is a surrender of traditional values of autonomy for an imperative to serve the transient desires of the market.

Finally, the contention that the role of the professional in education has changed is supported by Chris Woodhead (2009), the former Chief Inspector of Schools (Ofsted). Writing without a trace of irony in the Times Educational Supplement in May 2009, Woodhead argues that

"Teaching is a profession. By definition, professionals determine their own beliefs and practice. They don't twitch mindlessly as politicians pull the strings." His argument is, like Ball (1990) and Nixon (2004), that the teaching profession has lost this prized autonomy; it now merely does the bidding of politicians by implementing strategies that it had nothing to do with designing and which it has no control over; and – in the most ironic statement of all - is inspected by Ofsted using a methodology which seeks out only compliance. In a plea for individualism rather than uniformity Woodhead argues that

> "Schools exist to teach knowledge that would not be encountered elsewhere, or, at best, encountered in a fragmented fashion. The more challenging and alien that knowledge, the more powerful the curriculum will be."

For this to occur, he suggests, teachers need to change the conception of professionalism that they and society now have and move to regain the autonomy they apparently had prior to the election of Mrs Thatcher in 1979 and the advent of Ofsted in 1992. This then can be seen as part of the theoretical and contextual framework this research has operated within and which helps shape the analysis of the responses.

To conclude, the statements grouped together as having a staff focus can be interpreted in one way as seeing the academic simultaneously as a learner and an expert who is interested in developing and improving for the sake of themselves, their subject and their students. Equally some academics seem prepared to act only when they see a benefit to themselves. This might be in order to have control over their workload or it may be connected to the final group. Here academics seem to conceive of themselves as enacting

externally originated initiatives. However they do so in a way that makes sense to their own situation, thus again foregrounding the importance of the subject discipline and opposing the idea of "one-size-fits-all".

b. Subject focus.

There are 13 statements that have a focus on the academic discipline or subject. These again can be further subdivided. The first group of 11 statements illustrates another way by which academics conceive of themselves:

Code	Interview statement	No. in agreement
Q. Definitions of good practice?		
3.1	depends on subject context	**3**
3.2	staff need to be subject specialists	**5**
3.3	being up-to-date (in own subject specialism)	**2**
3.5	ways of working in line with (QAA) benchmark statement	**1**
Q. Definitions of poor practice		
5.1	transmitting knowledge rather than enabling and engaging	**1**
5.2	getting caught up in a specific way of thinking/acting	**1**
5.3	no willingness to help students	**1**
Q. How to share good practice?		
12.3	pedagogic interest group	**2**
12.4	academic mentors act as critical friends and share GP	**2**
13.1	staff more willing to take practice from others in same discipline	**2**
Q. Why identify good practice?		
15.3	so staff become more than subject specialists	**2**

Table 10. Subject focus.

This shows that academic staff see themselves very much as members of an academic community of subject specialists: Becher and Trowler's (2001) "academic tribes" or Brennan and Patel's (2008, p.19) understanding that "...it is a subject or disciplinary community...that provides individual academics with their prime source of identity." From this it is possible to argue that this particular view of what it is to be an academic in higher education also prioritises the individual's development within their academic community and, by extension, also privileges the views and opinions of members of the same

academic community above any other. There is an obvious contrast to the first theme described above although the student and subject views are not mutually exclusive. Indeed in order to provide the very best learning experience for the higher education student it could be argued that it is necessary for the academic to be a member of their academic tribe *and* to be aware of developments in their field even if they do not have the time and space afforded to, say full-time researchers, who may be at the forefront of these developments.

The second group of 2 statements seem to express opposing views to the previous grouping. Here there is a move to escape the draw of the academic community model and to embrace a changing perception of the role of the academic.

Code	Interview statement	No. in agreement
Q. Why learn from others?		
19.3	to escape own subject-specific paradigm	**2**
19.4	to change the conception of professionalism in HE	**2**

Table 11. Opposing views to table 10.

Although I have categorised these as having a subject focus – as they most obviously have – in reality these statements represent the interviewees arguing for change, and as such they could be more usefully placed alongside the statements which focus on the student. This may exemplify the multiple roles that academics exhibit, as discussed in chapter 2, with particular reference to the work of Nixon et al (2001a) and Hanbury et al (2008). Further, the statements may also represent a breaking down of the barriers between these roles as discussed in the same chapter by Blackmore et al (2010).

The final 11 statements with this broad subject focus are less easily grouped together and cover a range of different areas of interest.

Code	Interview statement	No. in agreement
Q. Definitions of good practice		
3.4	integrating theory with practice	**1**
3.6	subject specialism is reducing in importance	**2**
Q. Definitions of poor practice		

6.1	using technology (or other resources) as a life jacket	**2**
6.2	innovation for its own sake	**2**
6.3	teachers don't make use of ready made resources (existing examples of GP)	**1**
Q. Why identify good practice?		
15.4	to share practice outside of subject area	**1**
Q. Can good practice be shared across subjects?		
16.4	only in some subject areas	**1**
16.5	often needs specialist space	**1**
16.7	can't mindlessly transfer good practice	**1**
16.8	context is vital - subject, faculty etc	**5**
16.14	having a PSRB can encourage sharing of GP	**2**

Table 12. Remaining statements with a subject focus.

In conclusion the statements with a focus aimed broadly at the subject suggest a view of the academic which might be seen as building on the idea of them as learners, however they seem concerned either to be seen as establishing their place within their own academic subject community or seem to be concerned with extending beyond it. Either way, the subject discipline is seen as the primary focus.

c. Student focus.

The 26[16] statements that gather around this theme can be further subdivided into three areas. The first, with 17 statements attached to it, seems to concern the desire by academics to reflect upon, and if necessary change, their practice for the benefit of their students.

Code	Interview statement	No. in agreement
Definitions of good practice		
1.1	depends upon student mix (context)	8
1.2	relationship between tutor and learner	2
1.3	facilitating understanding	4
2.1	enhancing the student (learning) experience	5
2.2	supporting individual students	5
2.3	enabling students to grow	5
2.4	tapping in to student experience	3
2.5	need to be aware of students' previous ways of learning	2
2.6	active learning - "making students want to do things"	3
2.11	positive (formal and informal) student feedback	1

[16] 2 further statements are not included in this set of groupings (see section ii above)

4.3	appropriate and effective practice	3
Reasons to identify good practice		
15.2	to improve marking and feedback	1
Reasons to learn from others		
19.1	to meet changing student expectations	2
Effect of sharing good practice		
20.1	students more engaged	3
20.2	achievement is improved	3
20.3	student expectations raised	1
20.4	students feel part of process of module	1

Table 13. Student focus.

There may be a number of explanations for this, but a key one revolves around the idea of the academic as a facilitator and the student's learning experience as the most important element to consider. If this is so then this again appears to circle around issues of power and the role of the academic in higher education. If the academic sees themselves in the context of working directly with students primarily as a facilitator of student learning, even when they are perhaps also simultaneously a subject expert, then this is a significant shift in perception and it suggests that the primary concern is with the student's achievement. In this scenario content and delivery may well be tailored to meet the needs of the student, and this may in turn be seen by some as a demotion of the idea of the academic expert and of higher education as a way in which students come into contact with specialists in their field. This is to suggest that the roles of the academic are alterable and open to change dependent upon the context. In another context, for example presenting a paper at an academic conference or discussing curriculum management in a departmental meeting, the same academic may display ways of thinking and behaving that suggest other roles are dominant. Thus identities are fluid; they are not, however, in a state of flux – they solidify in one role then change to another. This is perhaps another way of describing Nixon et al's (2001b) ideas of the way academics identity is changing, discussed at length in chapter 2.

The second area, with 4 statements attached to it sees academic staff as passionate about their own subject areas and wanting to communicate this to their students. The aim here seems to be to encourage a similar passion in other people.

Code	Interview statement	No. in agreement
Q. Definitions of good practice		
2.7	igniting a passion	1
2.8	challenging students	4
2.9	maximising student potential	2
2.10	not just about getting students to pass	1

Table 14. Communicating passion to students.

This approach sees the academic as an advocate for, and disciple of, their subject. Unlike in the previous example, the subject is not demoted in importance but instead lies at the heart of the teaching enterprise. It is however different from the subject focussed discussion above because the aim is to encourage others to become involved in that subject – to inject new blood as it were - rather than to further develop the subject directly.

The final area, with 5 statements, concerns the academic's preoccupation with linking their work and approaches to institutional imperatives.

Code	Interview statement	No. in agreement
Q. Why identify good practice?		
14.1	to improve student achievement	1
14.2	to improve student experience	2
Q. Any other comments?		
22.1	pressure to fill places not safeguard standards	1
22.2	pressure to get students through not ask them to think	1
22.3	management need to support sharing of GP	3

Table 15. Links between the subject and the institution

This may suggest that the academic sees themselves primarily as an employee of the institution; one of whose duties is to put into practice institutional policy and practice. If this is so then again this suggests a view of the academic in this context as a professional which does not privilege the subject but instead sees the needs of the institution, and by extension, its students, as the main focus of any action. However as described previously this represents one of perhaps many roles and the transition between these is often fluid, even indiscernible. Academics working in higher education are individuals who have multiple views of themselves which overlap/change according to context even where there may be one dominant view that an

individual holds to as the most important. This is different from a state of flux where no identity can solidify and form.

In conclusion this set of statements provides perhaps the most varied set of conceptions of academic identity. One set sees the academic as a facilitator of student learning, another sees them as perpetuating the subject through engaging and inspiring the next generation of the academic tribe, and a final set sees them as putting into operation institutional policy and practice. These are different from the previous sets of statement discussed and they do represent a different way of understanding the role of the academic in higher education. As has been stated previously throughout this discussion though, these roles are often either co-existent or in constant flux. Any one individual academic inhabits any number of these roles during their working life, and often more than one at a time; as already discussed in chapter 2, that is what Coate et al (2001) meant when they discussed the need for an academic to have both an understanding of pedagogy and specialist subject knowledge and what Nixon et al (1997) had in mind when discussing a new conception of the academic based on seeing themselves as a learner

v. Institutional micro case in successfully sharing good practice: peer assessment and feedback.

Following the interviews described above I wanted to explore the last two of the original field questions in some depth, namely

27) Is it possible, through an analysis of this subject level approach, to discern any wider agreement of what constitutes good practice across an institution?
28) *If* it does prove possible to discern a wider agreement, is this helpful in improving the learning experience for all students?

In testing these last two field questions there is also an attempt to consider the second research question:
Does the search for such characteristics and examples challenge the primacy of the academic subject discipline, notions of academic identity and conceptions of academic professionalism in higher education?
Conclusions are drawn following the micro study below.

Entwistle and Hounsell (2007) undertook a research project jointly funded by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) looking at "...how the quality of learning and teaching was shaped by subject areas and course settings..." (p.1). Their conclusions were clear:

> "We found correspondences between the specific (Ways of thinking and Practising) WTPs of a subject and the elements of the teaching which students felt contributed most strongly to their learning. This suggested that the most successful approaches to teaching were those which addressed the disciplinary WTPs most directly." (p.3)

Later, in considering the major implications of their work they argue that:

> "Our findings also underscored the fundamental importance of the subject dimension to learning and teaching in higher education...it is vital that activities and resources which traverse subject boundaries be complemented by opportunities to consider discipline-specific purposes and requirements. Generic approaches are valuable, but need to be reinterpreted within each disciplinary setting." (p.3)

I wanted to test the conclusions of this research project – particularly the final sentence in the quotation above - against my own research findings and in my own institution, as is indicated in my second research question. There seems to be a similarity between this statement and the comment by I6 in particular which summed up a central theme from my research, that it is not possible to "mindlessly transfer good practice".

This development was not part of the original scope for this research and thus not directly part of the ethical approval submission (see appendix 3). However having consulted both the submission and approval letter I have concluded that the original ethical approval submission is able to encompass this development. I have consulted with my supervisor regarding this and have gained her approval. The participants in the interviews that constituted the micro study were provided with the same information sheet as all of the other interviewees and have signed the same consent form. Before the interview commenced I specifically discussed the issue of anonymity with them. They were made aware that the nature of a specific micro study such as this means

that more detailed information is part of the work and that as such it is possible for them to be more easily identified than the other participants. They were content with this and signed the consent form with this in mind. They are identified using the suitably androgynous pseudonyms "Sam" and "Jo" in the description below. It is interesting to note that, because I identified this work as an example of good practice the participants saw their participation in this research as part of the normal dissemination process connected to my cross-institutional role.

This case study utilises the work of Sam, from the Faculty of Humanities and Jo, from the Faculty of Technology. Initially both tutors were working separately and in isolation. They were both concerned with using peer assessment and feedback by students to improve the learning experience. Although they were working in the same general area, initially their work differed.

Sam has been using peer assessment and feedback with dance students in years one and two for four years. The students come with three action points written down that they wish to work on in the studio sessions. The action points are handed to the tutor who redistributes the requests for feedback to the group. A peer then observes each student and feedback is provided in written form on the action points identified. The feedback is returned to the tutor who returns them to the original student. The students then work in already existing learning sets to share and interpret or understand the feedback provided. The result is that each student is able to understand a range of interpretations and to consider them more objectively and in a supportive atmosphere where all the members of the learning set are helping each other to improve. The student is still able to decide whether to accept and implement the feedback.

Jo runs a multimedia production module for year two students. As a result of the collaborative project described in this micro case the students are now required to produce a multimedia product to be used by the public rather than a technical expert. The students attend a session where they have to

demonstrate their prototype design to their peers. They bring a series of questions that they want answering to this session. Their peers use the prototype and work on the questions asked and provide feedback. The work is also peer assessed by evaluating each student's work against a set of criteria. Anonymous written feedback is then provided to each student. Jo argues that the students can see the advantages of taking notice of the feedback given and analysis of the other assessment components within the module suggest that the students have a better understanding of the content.

As with many such projects Jo and Sam found out about each other's work following a chance encounter rather than a structured or planned event. Jo wrote an article in the university's e-Learning newsletter and as a result Sam contacted Jo by email and they arranged to meet and discuss their work. This newsletter is an example of academics belonging to more than one community of practice, as discussed in chapter 2. Here the academics show their membership of the e-learning community of practice which is in addition to their own subject discipline community of practice. The newsletter is an example of good practice in cementing identity within the members of that community of practice. Upon meeting they found that their individual projects complemented each other. They found that they shared the same underpinning philosophy and the same "pedagogic language", even though this is applied to different academic disciplines and put into operation in different contexts. As a consequence they jointly applied for a university Research Informed Teaching Award (RITA) to further their work together. The funding was originally intended to buy them out of teaching so that they could concentrate on their joint project. However this did not occur and so instead the money was used to fund catering at the student workshop / focus group. The funding was also used to enable the two members of the project to attend conferences in order to disseminate their work.

The project has established that the same ideas have been implemented in different disciplines and contexts but have given different results. This is not unsurprising and does not invalidate the joint working. Nor does it invalidate the shared philosophy, indeed it is to be expected; any other result may be

seen as contrived. Working on their joint project the tutors have nonetheless discovered that their students also share some similarities. Both sets of students work instrumentally in wanting to know how to improve their own work in order to improve their marks. The tutors argue that the students have embraced the peer assessment because it has an element of anonymity; they argue that this has been crucial in the take up of the approach presented. Both sets of students also like the fact that their assignments can be broken down into a series of distinct elements that can be commented upon. This has allowed the students providing feedback to focus on specific aspects, which has also been helpful to the student receiving the comments. However despite these similarities the students have adopted the marking cultures of their own disciplines rather than finding shared ground. The feedback remains shaped by the culture of the subject discipline.

As part of the project the students were brought together in order to discover whether they had shared understandings and expectations of peer assessment; what factors they felt helped them to develop as autonomous learners; and to evaluate the project. Although the students were seen as very different in many ways, stemming mainly from their subject disciplines, the tutors also felt that they shared a number of similarities. From taking part in this project the students had learnt more about their own practice and ways of working and this had affected their learning behaviours. From discussion in mixed groups they also found that they could understand each other's point of view and were better able to understand and respect each other's academic discipline.

From a staff point of view they felt that working together on this project has enabled them to progress further by working together rather than alone. They question each other's practice regularly, which challenges them to reconsider, to justify and to improve their work. The fact that their students produce very different outcomes has enabled them to concentrate on the pedagogic process and not to get distracted by the product.
Both tutors would also attribute their continually high attendance rates and levels of engagement and thus learning as a result of this way of working.

They explain this as the students accepting responsibility for giving feedback. They also feel that most – though not all - of their students have become more critical of their own work by being asked to provide feedback that is useful to their peers in helping them to improve. Jo reported a lower module failure rate than in previous years: just four of her students completely disengaged from the project and thus failed the module.

A key result of the project to date has been that both staff and students have clearly seen the similarities across different disciplines. Both members of staff now feel vindicated in their use of peer assessment to improve autonomous learning and feel that the project has encouraged new approaches to these aspects of learning and teaching. More tangibly both sets of students now get feedback much more quickly – and more regularly in the case of Dance - than might have been the case had they been waiting solely for a tutor. As a by-product the students have also discovered different approaches to learning, which has helped stop them getting stuck in a particular "discipline-focused mindset". This is seen as helpful to the students.
In the future more joint workshops are planned which will consider other ways in which they might work across the disciplines.

Both tutors feel that the project has worked, at least in part, because they both were prepared to learn from areas outside of their own discipline. There has not been a wholesale coming together of two different subjects' cultures; there has been no new combined pedagogy emerging. I would argue that this is not at all surprising considering the emphasis on the academic discipline that has emerged throughout this research. However their work has meant that both tutors have had to reconsider specific elements of their own practice and have had to try not to become wedded to what might be seen as "subject-specific elements" of their work. They have not allowed the culture of their subject discipline to "get in the way" of sharing, and this in itself is, I would argue, an example of good practice. Instead they have focussed on pedagogic methods and approaches rather than subject content and this has been combined with a desire to test these approaches in both their own and other academic disciplines.

In bringing this micro study back to the second research question one needs to ask whether the primacy of the academic subject discipline has been challenged. I would want to argue that it has not. As is suggested in my conclusion above, the students felt that although there were connections with other subjects, the connection to their own was the most important. Without the subject-specific element the pedagogic practice under investigation stood less chance of success; thus the subject discipline is what makes it immediately relevant to the students. Knowing this, the tutors would not prejudice student learning by demoting this importance.

From a tutor point of view though, it is possible to conclude from the micro study that the tutors were aware that the importance of the academic discipline needed to be put alongside a more general interest in learning and teaching: that is after all why they embarked on the project in the first place. It is possible to argue from this that academic identity and conceptions of academic professionalism have changed. I would agree to the extent that these two members of staff are interested in both the pedagogic practice and the way that it works within their subject. As such they are examples of what I1 described as "hybrid professionals". I do not want to argue that this is a significant shift in professional identity – indeed for the two individuals concerned I would like to suggest that it marks no shift at all – but the fact that academic colleagues can find points of contact and can benefit from working together to apply the same ideas in different academic disciplines does illustrate that it can be done, and done successfully without compromising the integrity of the discipline. My final conclusion from this micro study though is that the audience is crucial. For the students it seemed to be very important that the link to the subject was not lost; for these two members of staff this seemed to be less of a concern because the pedagogic element was a key motivating factor. This suggests that for a project like this to be accepted, it is 'spin' - the way that it is presented or sold - that may differ dependent upon the audience. This could be interpreted as a reassuring message because it means that it is possible for the pedagogic interests of teaching and learning to sit alongside the demands of the academic discipline; it could also imply

that an academic member of staff is able to straddle the twin demands of pedagogy and subject with success. However, for those concerned that the primacy of the subject is in danger, anything that seems like the promotion of something else (in this case pedagogy) suggests the demotion of the thing that for them identifies them. Whilst I do not want to over-inflate the claims for this micro study I would want to point to the individuals concerned and suggest that they remain wedded to their subject identity and yet are also interested in pushing forward developments in their own pedagogy.

Chapter 6. Joining the dots and making the links.

i. Introduction

This chapter will try to make the links between the primary research at the heart of the project and the existing body of knowledge that has been referred to in earlier chapters. The chapter has four sections: the first considers the limitations of the primary research; the second evaluates whether the original research questions were answered; the third demonstrates how the primary research builds on and supports the existing body of knowledge; and the fourth makes claims for the possible application of the primary research for higher education institutions.

ii. What are the limitations of the primary research?

The data discussed in Chapter 5 presents a rich picture of the opinions of a wide range of academic staff, operating across all five faculties and two central departments of one higher education institution. There are clear limitations to this research with regard to the sample size used for the interviews and for the range of people included in that sample. Thirteen interviews took place and although, as described in Chapter 5, every attempt was made to represent all of the faculties within the institution and the range of academic staff employed by the institution, this has only been partially successful. The table below describes the spread of experience and expertise found amongst the interviewees:

A	B	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Interview no.	Faculty	Central service	Chair of FLTC	Head of Dept	Head of Studies	Dean	Teacher Fellow	National Teacher Fellow	e-learning	New staff
1	A		✓	✓						
2	C						✓		✓	
3	D			✓			✓	✓		
4	C		✓				✓			
5		F						✓	✓	

6	E		✓		✓					
7	D						✓	✓		
8	B		✓	✓						
9		G		✓						
10	B			✓						
11	C								✓	
12	C					✓				
13	C									✓

Table 16. Experience and expertise of interviewees.

It is clear from this table that although all five faculties are represented in the sample of interviewees, the spread is uneven with only one interviewee coming from faculty A and faculty E but two coming from faculty B and D and five coming from faculty C. Equally, the roles that the interviewees play within the institution may be multiple but again they are not evenly distributed: eight interviewees have one or more 'management' roles at various levels within the institution (as defined by columns E-H); five interviewees have roles closely and specifically connected to teaching and learning (as defined by columns I-J); there is a range of experience but only one new member of staff in the sample. This was not intentional; this was not a wholly purposive sample, it did contain elements of uncontrolled or random selection, and in so doing can be seen as developing organically. However although the range does provide a level of credibility to the primary research findings, limitations still have to be placed on the conclusions that can be drawn, most particularly the ability to generalise - or even make policy proposals – using this research evidence alone.

The second major limitation is the institutional context within which this research was conducted. The fact that only one higher education institution was used limits the generalisability of the conclusions that can be drawn. More specifically this institution was identified as a post 1992 HEI (an ex-Polytechnic) inhabiting a city centre campus, with an emphasis on teaching undergraduates as well as a minority of research-intensive areas. It also serves a specific geographical area which has a distinctive multi-ethnic local identity. However, as Cho and Trent (2006) discuss, this does not necessarily challenge the overall validity of this type of qualitative research: the methods

used were sound and ethical, the findings have been analysed using approaches common to much qualitative research and the conclusions are couched in language which does not claim universal significance.

The final major limitation of the research is, like the others, also one of its strengths. The notion of insider research has already been discussed in chapter 4 and Morse (1998, p.61) has warned of some of the dangers associated with insider research:

> It is not wise for an investigator to conduct a qualitative study in a setting where he or she is already employed and has a work role. The dual roles of investigator and employee are incompatible, and they may place the researcher in an untenable position.

However I did not experience these conflicts in my research; indeed I want to argue that there are clearly advantages to, in this case, researching one's own institution. Firstly there has been relatively easy access to participants and they have been cooperative; secondly I have not had to work hard to gain the trust of the participants since this has been built up as I have undertaken my institutional role; and finally as the researcher I have had access to empirical evidence, mainly documents, which have enabled me to place the comments of interviewees in context and to develop my research more easily than I might otherwise have done.

Brannick & Coghlan (2007, p.60) have laid out another of the problems associated with insider research, the specific rather than general nature of the outcomes: "...inquiry from the inside involves researchers as actors immersed in local situations generating contextually embedded knowledge that emerges from experience." It seems clear from the analysis of the interviews that my own positionality is bound to come into play. All of the interviewees have either worked with me directly or have heard of my work within the institution based around identifying good practice. Thus both interviewer and interviewee had what Platt (1981, p.77) describes as "a history and perceived characteristics". This may mean that whilst they seemed content to discuss good practice, they may have felt more inhibited in discussing "poor" practice, in effect self-censoring themselves based upon their knowledge or

expectations of me. This is a common issue for insider researchers. Whilst Platt (1981, p.77) discusses the need to maintain relationships after the interviews are completed, so that the "day job" can continue, Chew-Graham et al (2002) describe the way in which interviewees first react to the interviewer. Although their example of interviewing fellow professionals is concerned specifically with doctors researching other doctors, Chew-Graham et al make points which remain relevant to this particular research project. They describe their fellow doctors utilising what might be described as 'a set of strategies' when being interviewed which suggest an interesting response to being interviewed by a peer. The responses range from a (perhaps feigned) surprise in discovering the interviewer was also a doctor (p.286), to appearing to hold back information (p.286), to being a confidant (p.287). Chew-Graham argues that

> "...it became increasingly apparent that the identity that respondents attributed to the interviewer played an important part in forming the 'data' that were collected" (p.288).

She sees the advantage of peer interviews as being about perhaps greater honesty, with the interviewee being less on their guard and presenting less of a "public" face and more of a "private" one. Having examined and analysed the notes from my interviews and listened to the recordings carefully I can recognise perhaps the second and third stage Chew-Graham describes, though not the first and I remain convinced that this did not significantly compromise the outcomes of the interviews. Finally, Hodkinson (2005, p.146) argues that the advantages of being an insider researcher clearly outweigh the disadvantages:

> "...for those researchers who do occupy a position of proximity consistent and substantial enough to warrant the notion of insider researcher...there is clear value in attempting to share understandings and reflections on the possibilities and problems that may emanate from such a circumstance...the position of insider researcher may offer significant potential benefits in terms of practical issues such as access and rapport, at the same time as constituting an additional resource that may be utilised to enhance the quality of the eventual understandings produced."

For Platt (1981, p.89) the advantages and the disadvantages of being an insider researching one's own institution have to coexist. She argues with

regard to interviewing one's peers: "The weaknesses...are intrinsically bound up with its strengths as a specialised mode of social interaction." I want to argue that the access to what I genuinely believe to be the openness and honesty of the interviewees together with the ability to place individual responses into a wider context has greatly improved this research project.

In conclusion there are three key limitations: sample size, institutional specificity and insider research. However the advantages to these aspects are greater than the disadvantages. It is worth reiterating that although the conclusions of this research may be limited in their relevance to a wider audience, their specificity makes them all the more important to the individual institution in which they are based.

iii. Did the primary research answer the original research and field questions?

This section will consider the effectiveness of the primary research in answering the first research question and the field questions that emerged from it, taking into account the limitations described in section ii above. The first research question[17] for this project was: "Is it possible to define the characteristics of, and examples of, good practice in learning and teaching within different subject disciplines operating within a post 1992 English University in order to identify potential similarities and differences between them?"

This research question led to five field questions that guided the primary research:

i. Can academics identify good practice in their own areas? Does this happen?
ii. Once identified is any good practice then disseminated to colleagues within their wider subject discipline?

[17] The second research question: "Does the search for such characteristics and examples challenge the primacy of the academic subject discipline, notions of academic identity and conceptions of academic professionalism in higher education?" emerged after the primary research had been completed.

iii. Do academics think this dissemination has any discernable impact upon student learning?
iv. Is it possible, through an analysis of this subject level approach, to discern any wider agreement of what constitutes good practice across an institution?
v. *If* it does prove possible to discern a wider agreement, is this helpful in improving the learning experience for all students?

The field questions and findings.

In answering the first field question the data from the thirteen interviews (see appendix 4) showed clearly that all of the interviewees thought that it was possible to identify good practice in learning and teaching within their own subject discipline. It was the first question that was asked of them during the interviews and all of them answered in the affirmative. However during the discussion it became apparent that what the interviewees identified as good practice differed. This is not surprising in retrospect because, it is possible to argue, of the primacy of the academic discipline as discussed in chapter 2. Indeed it was this reflexive approach to the development of my research focus that led to the emergence of the second research question and the three associated sub-questions, but this was not what was perhaps naively envisaged when this research project was initially constructed (see chapter 1). I had expected to be able to see, if not the same practice in different areas, then certainly practice that was identifiably similar. This has not happened. In fact the research project and the interviews specifically did not evolve to discuss specific examples of practice, they tended to concern themselves with more strategic level issues, as will be discussed in response to the later field questions. This may have been due to the fact that the interviewees had, with one exception, wider remits than that of a practitioner. Their roles as managers of various kinds and their different remits for example meant that their responses were wider in perspective and, perhaps inevitably, shallower in depth.

The second part of the first field question asked whether the identification of good practice in learning and teaching actually took place. Here the responses were more varied. Only three separate ways of discovering good

practice were identified on six occasions during the thirteen interviews (see chapter 5). This suggests that although the identification of good practice does occur, it is not systematic and certainly not part of the structures that operate across the institution. As we shall see in response to most of the field questions, the degree of take up seems to be determined at a local level. This may be a positive aspect for the institution, allowing contextualisation to determine what is most appropriate for the local community; but such a lack of dissemination might also mean that some students are unaware of or unable to take advantage of the practices that some of their peers take for granted.

The second field question asked whether, once identified, any good practice is then disseminated to colleagues within their wider subject discipline. This received a varied response. For some teams, according to I10, there was a regular exchange of ideas and good practice was a standing item on staff meeting agendas, but this seemed to be the exception. At the other extreme was the view of I2 who argued that "staff in HE tend to work alone, in boxes." Perhaps more representative was the view expressed by eight of the interviewees that good practice is mainly disseminated through formally organised staff development sessions.

What seems to be key here then is firstly a notion that academic staff are prepared to engage with ideas and ways of working which are not their own: in the main they do not appear to be exclusive or to work in isolation. This seems to me to be a significant finding and does provide evidence that may help answer the second research question of this project, as will be discussed later. However this way of working is not a natural act, it has to be engineered. It is also not organic; it does not spring up spontaneously. Instead it has to be organised for academic staff and that brings with it the issue of who does the organising. This research shows that the organisation tended to be done by those with a specific responsibility for such events and/or those in a management role. This has the capacity to change the nature of the event completely– or at least its perception – and it runs the risk of seeming to be imposed on academics "from above", which, I would argue, is bound to change the impact of such events.

The third field question asked whether subject teams thought this dissemination of examples of good practice in learning and teaching had any discernable impact upon student learning. The conclusion from this research is that the majority of respondents did not see any direct causal link between the two. Only three interviews talked about this occurring at all and of these only one was prepared to argue that

> "The sharing of good practice does have an effect upon students – they are better engaged in the module: student expectations are raised; assessment is improved; students feel part of the process of the module." (I4)

It is worth noting that this interviewee comes from an academic discipline that is wholly governed by its professional body. It is also the case that the good practice being described is likely to be laid down by that professional body, as the expected way of working in the profession. Thus, this is the dissemination of good practice which is in effect approved and is mandatory; it is therefore not the same as the understanding of good practice articulated by other interviewees, where other possible approaches may be put forward for discussion and consideration. This may explain why the sharing of this particular example of good practice appears to have so positive an effect upon these particular students. Across the majority of the interviews then the sharing of good practice in learning and teaching was not seen as having a direct causal impact on student learning. Improvements in student learning have not been the focus of this research project however. Instead the research has been concerned with the sharing of good practice in learning and teaching. It can be argued that the impact of this sharing will be upon the thinking and practice of the individual academic and as such any impact on the student will be indirect and long-term. This in itself is not a negative conclusion since it also, by implication, foregrounds the complex nature of learning and teaching. If there were approaches that had a direct impact on student learning in all contexts then one might argue that such approaches would already have been adopted, and this research would have been unnecessary!

The final two field questions asked whether it is possible, through an analysis of a subject level approach, to discern any wider agreement of what constitutes good practice across an institution and then, *if* it does prove possible to discern a wider agreement, is this helpful in improving the learning experience for all students. These questions were not directly asked during the interview process but the responses to other questions mean that it is possible to conclude that other than at a generic level the interviewees were not able to agree or identify good practice across the institution. This is not surprising considering the emphasis placed in the conclusions drawn from this research of the local context. It seems possible to conclude therefore that even when it is possible to agree on generic elements of teaching it is the act of contextualising that makes them meaningful and more likely to be considered and then adopted. It therefore seems appropriate to answer the final field question by concluding that it is this act of contextualisation that will improve the student learning experience. The unquestioning adoption of good practice from a different academic discipline does not seem to be as productive as when that same practice is considered and then contextualised by academics working within the boundaries of their own discipline. This is because the act of contextualising requires critical reflection and evaluation before anything else. If, following such reflection and evaluation the practice is seen as useful, it seems sensible to conclude that when adopted it stands a good chance of positively affecting the student learning experience simply because it has been thought about. It is also possible to assume that asking individual or groups of academics to adopt good practice in learning and teaching from another area (however successful it may have be shown to have been) in an unquestioning way or by some kind of coercion (such as the imposition of a rigid institutional policy which does not allow for any flexibility) is unlikely to be effective. This conclusion links back to the discussion in chapter 2 of Smylie's (1998) and Gurung et al's (2009, p.3) work on the identification of signature pedagogies, those "ways of thinking that are essential to a particular discipline...(or)...what it means to think, create, demonstrate, know and evaluate." It also links directly to the work of Wenger (1998) also discussed in chapter 2 around communities of practice where (in this case) academics value and share experiences they have learned and by

so doing create meaning about the world of (in this case) teaching and learning. Therefore the contextualising of good practice allows the academics concerned to become owners of their version of the practice concerned and this ownership seems vital to any adoption that may take place.

The research questions.

Having considered the field questions it is now possible to consider the overarching research questions for this project. One message to emerge when considering the first research question is that the project has shown that those interviewed believe that, in principle and within their own academic disciplines, it is possible within at least one post-1992 English University to identify the characteristics of good practice in learning and teaching within different subject disciplines. However in replying to the very first interview question, the interviewees did not identify examples of specific practices, instead they argued that this was something that could be, and for some was done within the subject teams concerned. What also emerges from the overall research is that it is the observer/researcher who remains divorced from any individual subject discipline that appears to be in a privileged position which allows them to identify cross disciplinary links in a way that those interviewed could not or did not. This was, I want to argue, because the interviewees were very close to their subject and also because they rarely felt that they had either the opportunity or inclination to look up and across at the work of others. It seems that it is local ownership, reflection and evaluation by academics, individually and in their various groups, which is vital for development in learning and teaching to occur.

This conclusion links directly to the second research question. It seems from this research that local ownership of good practice in learning and teaching is clearly tied up with the primacy of the academic subject discipline. As has already been discussed in chapter 2, this is in turn intimately connected to notions of academic identity and conceptions of academic professionalism in higher education. The research findings strongly suggest that only when these are in place and are secure will the dissemination of good practice in learning and teaching have a positive effect upon the student learning experience. It is therefore possible to conclude from this research that the primacy of the

subject discipline is still crucial to an understanding of learning and teaching in UK higher education. This primacy is encapsulated in the notions of the academic working on their own as identified by I2 and of "distance to travel" identified by I6 in chapter 5. However there is also within this research a movement, at least in some of the interviews, towards an acceptance of different ways of working taken from other disciplines. The notion of the "hybrid" professional described in this research by I1, together with ideas such as the regular sharing of ideas and approaches through enrolling on introduction to teaching programmes such as the institution's PGCertHE (I13), team teaching (identified by I7) and at team meetings (identified by I10) may be seen as examples of the development of Whitchurch's (2008, p.23) "blended professionals", Gurung et al's (2009) "signature pedagogies" and Fanhangel's (2009) interpretations of "communities of practice" where new ideas and approaches are discussed and accepted into the community, and once trialled successfully and adopted widely becoming new examples of signature pedagogies. They may even be seen as examples of what Nixon et al (2001b) describe as a "manifesto of hope". Nixon et al argue that academics are adapting to meet the demands of the changing environment in higher education, including the changing student body and the changing curriculum, teaching and assessment those students want and need. Nixon et al see this as a successful example of evolution because in the process they continue to maintain the importance of notions such as academic collegiality and subject allegiance, which are still at the heart of the academy.

The primary research has also shown that the importance of the student is now centre stage. I want to argue that this should not be seen as a move towards accepting consumerist notions of higher education; but might instead be interpreted as a move towards academics conceiving of themselves as professionals who are, as Hanbury et al (2008) argued, equally concerned with both what their curriculum contains and how to teach it to the students they have contact with. I would see this as part of the rise of pedagogy. It is perhaps also part of the movement from tribal affinity to the sense of belonging to a wider community. It is for these reasons that this research makes a contribution to the discussions around academic practice and has some importance.

iv. How does the primary research add to the existing body of knowledge?

The thirteen semi-structured interviews found that although all of the interviewees thought that it was possible to identify examples of good practice in learning and teaching, they had a variety of views depending upon their academic subject discipline. Whilst some interviewees such as I1 were, in principle, prepared to learn from others outside of their discipline, others such as I7 and I8 felt that their peers in their subject discipline were the key players to learn from. This links directly back with notions of signature pedagogies and to communities of practice but also with the conclusions drawn by Prosser et al (2005) who discuss the effect this may have on the student. They argue that "the approaches academics take are systematically related to the conceptions of teaching that they hold and there is a relationship between the way teachers approach and conceive of their teaching and the way their students experience learning" (p.138). What Prosser et al are therefore doing is highlighting the importance of identifying examples of good practice because to change one's own practice is also to potentially affect one's students' learning.

What also emerges from the interviews is a vision of teaching and learning which, when viewed from ground level, suggests that the subject disciplines look separate from one another (see figure 15 and 16 below). The very firm belief that there are separate, almost autonomous subject disciplines and that these have primacy in higher education matters to the interviewees because from the interview evidence they appear to be bound up with usually unspoken notions of academic identity and conceptions of academic professionalism in higher education. This thus supports the views of Kogan (2000) as discussed in chapter 2 that academic identity flourishes within the discipline and that the academic and their institution have a symbiotic, although not always harmonious, relationship which allows time and space for the relationship between the individual academic and their discipline to develop in order that the institution benefits from that development directly or indirectly.

Becher and Trowler's (2001) notion of an "academic tribe" is part of this relationship between the individual academic and their subject discipline but, as discussed later in this chapter, it might also be seen to sit somewhat unhappily alongside the notion of a wider academic community. The tribe provides a focal point and thus one might suggest that the subject provides that sense of belonging and allegiance – for some even a sense of family – as described by Healey (2000) in chapter 2. It does seem possible that one of the reasons that the tribal notion is attractive is because it provides a sense of protection, what Healey (2000, p.173) describes as "a sense of themselves". Perhaps psychologically this is a protection against being swallowed up by the institution and losing one's academic identity: a protection against becoming merely a worker or drone. However whilst Thackwray (2007, p.181) argues that "...epistemological differences between disciplines are important..." the notion of tribe also brings with it possible connotations of insularity and exclusivity. These notions were displayed by one interviewee (I7) through the idea of only learning from others in the same discipline and expressed by another interviewee (I6) in the key notion of 'travelling distance'. This would explain the resistance to the promotion of generic approaches to learning and teaching – the "mindless transfer" described by that same interviewee (I6) – because the generic suggests a lack of specific academic identity and this may in turn smack of a diminution in academic identity and thus perhaps even an act of de-professionalisation. This conclusion addresses directly the second research question for this project:

> *Does the search for such characteristics and examples challenge the primacy of the academic subject discipline, notions of academic identity and conceptions of academic professionalism in higher education?*

As stated above, sitting alongside this tribal affiliation is the idea of community. It might be argued that the ubiquitous term 'academic community' suggests a sense of belonging to something wider than the subject and thus perhaps also a willingness to get along with one's neighbours, even to share – in this case ideas and approaches to learning and teaching. This argument

then suggests a further set of sub-questions to the second research question such as:

a. *How do the interviewees express their allegiance to their subject discipline?*
b. *Do academics consciously consider the wider academic and/or institutional community when making decisions about good practice or are they concerned only with their own specific subject discipline?*
c. *What do academics consider to be the relationship between generic aspects of teaching and discipline or context specific aspects?*

In relation to these sub-questions, there were those interviewees who showed a community approach much more than the tribal mentality (I3, I4, I5, I9, I10 and I13 for example). Henkel (2005, p.164) saw this as "engaging across the boundaries of the institution." Such academics as these, it may be argued, are engaged in what Kreber and Cranton (2000) has developed as "the scholarship of (university) teaching" (previously discussed in chapter 2) where they are concerned with "learning and knowing about teaching" (2000, p.476) and "share their knowledge and advance the knowledge of teaching and learning in the discipline in a way that can be peer-reviewed" (Kreber, 2002b, p.5). This will result, Kreber argues, in "a community of scholars, diverse in all the ways that matter in teaching and learning, whose work will advance the profession of teaching and deepen student learning" (2002a, p.152), what she later calls "a wisdom of practice" (2003, p.96) which has the, as yet unfulfilled, potential to be " a catalyst for curricula changes in higher education" (2005, p.391). Such academics value the relationship between student and tutor and want to find ways to help the student to grow and, as Henkel (2004, p.23) describes it "passing on your knowledge to other people" especially new knowledge emanating from the academic's own research. Academics may challenge their students and demand that they stretch themselves but they do this because their aim is to engage the student in their learning and as such enable them to perhaps think differently, by so doing to grow intellectually and consequently to improve their achievement. This does not mean that they cannot also value their own academic identity as a subject expert, but it is to see this perhaps as a necessary prerequisite for helping to ignite an interest in the student. There is again a link back here to the idea discussed in chapter 2

of inducting new members of the tribe, thus showing that these different ways of focusing are interrelated and inter-dependant.

Although these attitudes have been separated out for the sake of illustration and discussion, often they were present together within the responses of an interviewee, not interchangeable but cohabiting. This refers back to the second sub-question of research question two for this project. Such interviewees might well be seen as examples of the "hybrid professional" described by I1 in her interview or perhaps examples of a move towards Whitchurch's (2009) notion of the "blended professional"; this is perhaps also part of Nixon et al's (2001b, p.232) idea of the current direction of the development of academics in higher education, where there are may have what they describe as a "plurality of occupations" within the HE sector and an individual academic may take on a number of roles including researcher, teacher and manager. It is possible to suggest that if this is the case then it is a positive step. As discussed in chapter 2 Whitchurch (2008, p.3) argues positively that the emergence of a "third space" where the "professional and academic domains" meet allows for greater development of thinking and sharing of experience, leading to a greater understanding. Blackmore et al (2010, p.108) agree that the divides between the members of different academic disciplines is becoming more "permeable" and that academic staff now work more closely with "academic support staff". Elsewhere Hanbury et al (2008) see a change towards a more student-focussed approach as a positive development. However it is also possible that this shift in the understanding of what it is to be a professional academic in higher education may not be completely positive. Nixon et al (2001b, p.233) see the taking on of the various roles, including researcher, teacher and manager as signifying the emergence of "a new proletariat", perhaps suggesting a loss of focus, expertise and focus. This may be a shift that challenges the primacy of the academic discipline; if so it is not insignificant.

Overall though in the primary research concerned here it appears that each academic discipline is concerned with learning and teaching in its own way because the individual academics interviewed do tend to focus on their

subject. Equally because they also tend to work in isolation within that subject, the interviewees seem to have little knowledge of their neighbour and very little chance (I8) or inclination (I2) to share good practice, as illustrated below:

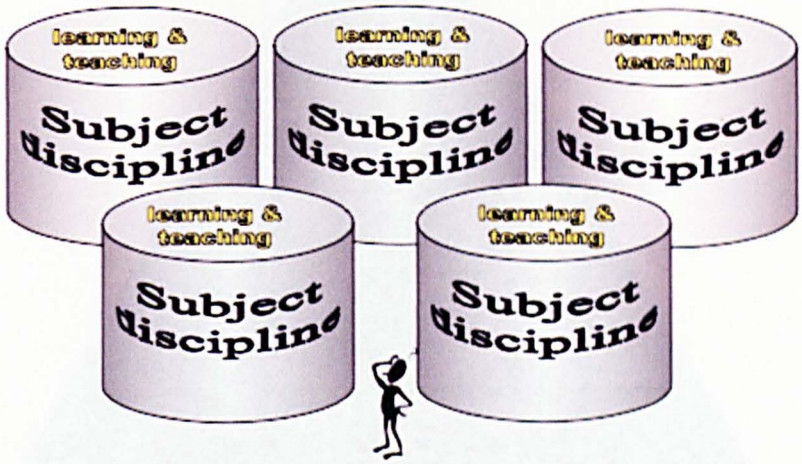

Figure 10. The view from the ground: each subject discipline looks to operate in isolation with its own understanding and examples of good practice in learning and teaching.

However when these subject disciplines are observed from the top, as it were, and a bird's eye view is taken, as the interviewer has done – then commonalities and links come in to view:

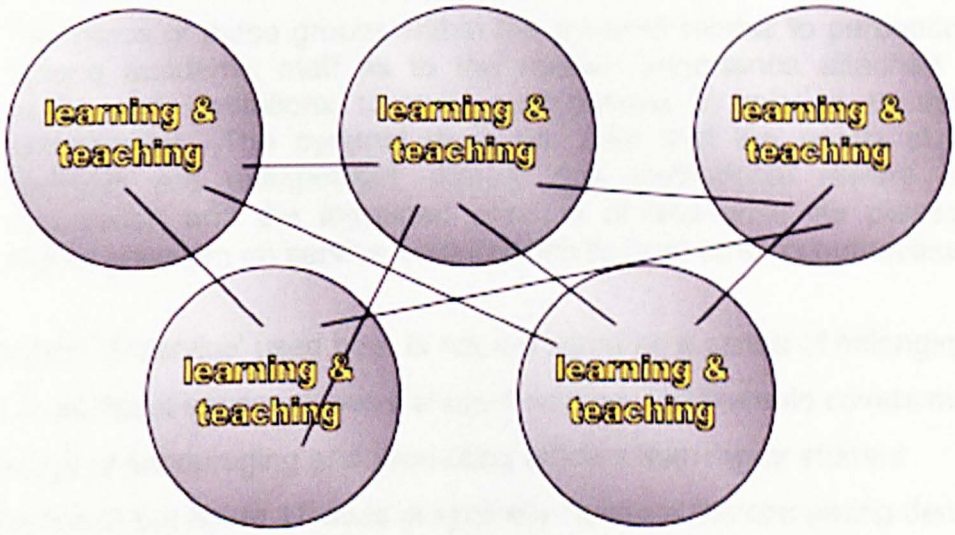

Figure 11. The view from above: each subject discipline has links with its neighbour regarding an understanding and examples of good practice in learning and teaching that cannot be otherwise seen.

Macfarlane (2007, p.264) has developed this idea by describing "five overlapping communities that (academics) serve" which he represents graphically as a pyramid. In this pyramid the subject discipline was placed near the top and "student service" was at the bottom:

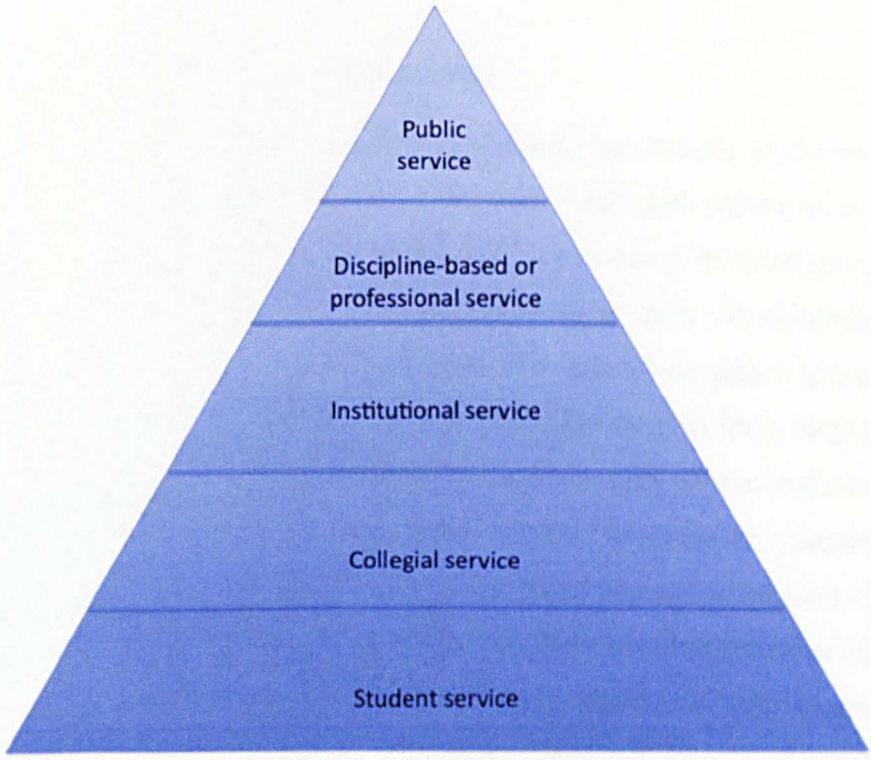

Figure 12: simplified version of Macfarlane's (2007) "Service Pyramid"

Macfarlane (2007, p.266) argues that:

> The place of these groups within the pyramid relates to perceptions among academic staff as to the relative importance attached by peers and institutions to their contributions in relation to these communities...The pyramid does not infer that the needs of the students are unimportant; merely that institutional reward and recognition and the ingrained practice of academic life places a higher premium on service contributions to (the) other communities.

The notion of 'service' used here is not the same as a sense of belonging, it is wider in all that it encompasses ("student service" for example covers more than ways of encouraging and promoting student learning or student engagement) but figure 17 does graphically illustrate the competing demands that the individual academic has made upon them. It is possible to argue that this process of change in the role of the academic and these different and evolving ways of conceiving of that role are bound to become even more important as the age of mass higher education takes a firmer grip. It will continue to become differentiated as more students aspire to or demand a higher education and as the financial costs to the student increase with the raising of the fee cap in 2012.

v. Who sees any connections?

One of the issues that emerge from viewing the results of the primary research as described is to ask who in an institution would have this bird's eye view and thus see these connections? The answer, in most circumstances, does not seem to be the individual academic worker. As described in chapter 2, once an academic is established in their post they seem to be concerned with their own subject discipline and developments in their field and, as Ylijoki (2000) suggests, develop a discipline-specific way of viewing and reacting to the world. Academics also appear to respond to these developments to a large extent on an individual basis. This then has repercussions for the way in which academics are perceived and how they are helped to develop themselves, the curriculum they create and teach and their students. It would seem that any intervention which aims to promote improvement needs to be set in a specific context and talk specifically to one group at a time – the distance to travel described by I6. Therefore, bulk delivery of staff development (that is delivering staff development to as many people as possible at one time) and generic staff development (that is staff development which does not take account of the specific discipline context the participants work within) would seem to be ineffective for academics. This finds resonance in Smylie's (1998) work on academic development, discussed in chapter 2.

This has considerable resource implications but more importantly presents significant difficulties for anybody attempting to develop, for example, a corporate approach to an issue because corporate approaches and policies almost by definition put the institution first and downgrade the importance of the constituent parts of the organisation, namely (in HE) the academic disciplines. This conclusion corresponds to the conclusions drawn in chapter 2 from the literature, including Fanghanel's (2009) notions of communities of practice, Gurung's (2009) work on signature pedagogies and the importance of the academic discipline to academic identity as discussed by Healey (2000), Thackwray (2007) and others.

Instead, the answer from this research seems to be that two sets of people are in a unique position to see the connections across subjects. The first is those members of academic staff undertaking an *Introduction to learning and teaching* course as part of their induction to the institution. These members of staff, as is argued in chapter 2, are more likely to meet with colleagues from other disciplines and to share (even observe) other ways of addressing issues; they are thus perhaps more likely to pick up new or different ways of working and to try them in their own context. As has been discussed previously, work by Rust (2000) and later Smith (2004) suggests that this way of working can contribute to changes in behaviour and pedagogic practice. This is supported by the evidence provided by Nicholls (2005) who argues that practitioners should be engaged in constructing their own pedagogic knowledge and developing theory from practice, although she has also warned (Nicholls, 2010) that as subjects themselves become more specific and "atomised" they run the risk of losing any coherent overall identity and thus any shared approaches to pedagogy.

The second group are those with a management position – at whatever level. As the model put forward in chapter 2 (figure 3) has demonstrated, once that initial introductory course has been completed the career trajectory for the individual academic is bound up with the subject discipline and as such there is little time or space to consider much else. It is only when an academic takes on a management role, which is by definition wider in its remit than the concerns of the individual academic, that they can become reacquainted with ideas operating elsewhere. This wider remit includes what King Alexander (2000, p.427) refers to as "a utilitarian perspective, (where) economic values are supreme and the quantification of fiscal resources is the true measure of value" and what Gleeson and Shain (1999, p.461) refer more succinctly to as "senior managers promoting the managerial bottom line". From the research undertaken here it appears that those with a management responsibility are required to enable and encourage the staff they have responsibility for to look beyond their immediate horizons. This is fraught with both dangers and contradictions but it appears, at least from this research, that if those with a management responsibility do not take this role on then the identification and

dissemination of good practice in learning and teaching to a wider audience might not occur at all.

Those in management positions, such as heads of Schools or Departments or Subjects, also appear to have a different vision of the new professional in higher education perhaps in the way that Nixon (2001b) meant in chapter 2 when he referred to a new academic professionalism and Whitchurch (2008, p.23) implies in her notion of a "third space" opening up where academic and non-academic staff operate together on joint projects. This new conception of the academic professional appears to be of someone who lays equal importance to the teaching as the research of their subject – what Coate et al (2001) see as the importance of scholarship and what one interviewee (I1) described as a "hybrid". It may be that such a view seems to emerge from managers because they are concerned with students' performance and satisfaction across a larger grouping than the individual academic might be. This may be the factor that connects the two groups: what Hanbury et al (2008) saw as greater student focus but at different stages in an academic's career development and for contrasting reasons. However it might also be bound up with the nature of what it is to work in higher education today; or at least what it is to work in one particular post-1992 institution as described in chapter 4. It might also be connected to other national phenomena such as the rise in importance of metrics, for example the National Student Survey, and new managerialism (see chapter 3). If so then there is a paradox present: if the managers are the ones who are able to see the connections then it is reasonable to expect them to champion and promote these links and connections. Yet at the heart of their role lie the demands of measurement and accountability – as described above - which can mean they are concerned with responding to these demands rather than promoting the links and connections that they in particular can see. Such academics are also, by dint of their role in the management structure, one step removed from their academic colleagues and are therefore perhaps less able to effectively champion the connections they can see.

vi. What are the possible applications of the primary research?

From the conclusions above it seems that despite the fact that there is clearly currently a propensity across all sectors of education, encouraged by the latest government agenda, to liberally sprinkle around such terms as `good (or best) practice` and `excellence`, there appears to be little real agreement as to what these terms mean in practice. On many occasions the model of good practice used seems based upon experience gained over time and/or an implicit but widely accepted model held by peers within the particular sector or subject area concerned. It is therefore perhaps futile to try to move to a universally agreed definition of good practice, indeed Fielding (2005, p.58) sees the idea of the "decontextualised representation of practice" as "inauthentic" and later as "nothing more than a delusion". What matters then is that any example held up as good practice has a resonance for those involved. Only if this is the case will the identification of good practice be seen as a way of enabling and empowering academics and their institution to improve the quality of the student learning experience. The link with a quality system, however enabling and empowering its intention is through the creation of a process. A process may formalise events and run the risk of taking away any spontaneity but if done sympathetically, with input and understanding from those who will use it then it can still be owned by the academics and can be seen as empowering and enabling. The model below attempts to do just that.

From the results of this research it is possible to construct a model for use across an institution such as my own which harnesses its diversity, celebrates the local expertise and tries to disseminate in a way that will be of benefit for more (even most) students. This model also shows how the impact and influence of a single example of good practice grows as it progresses:

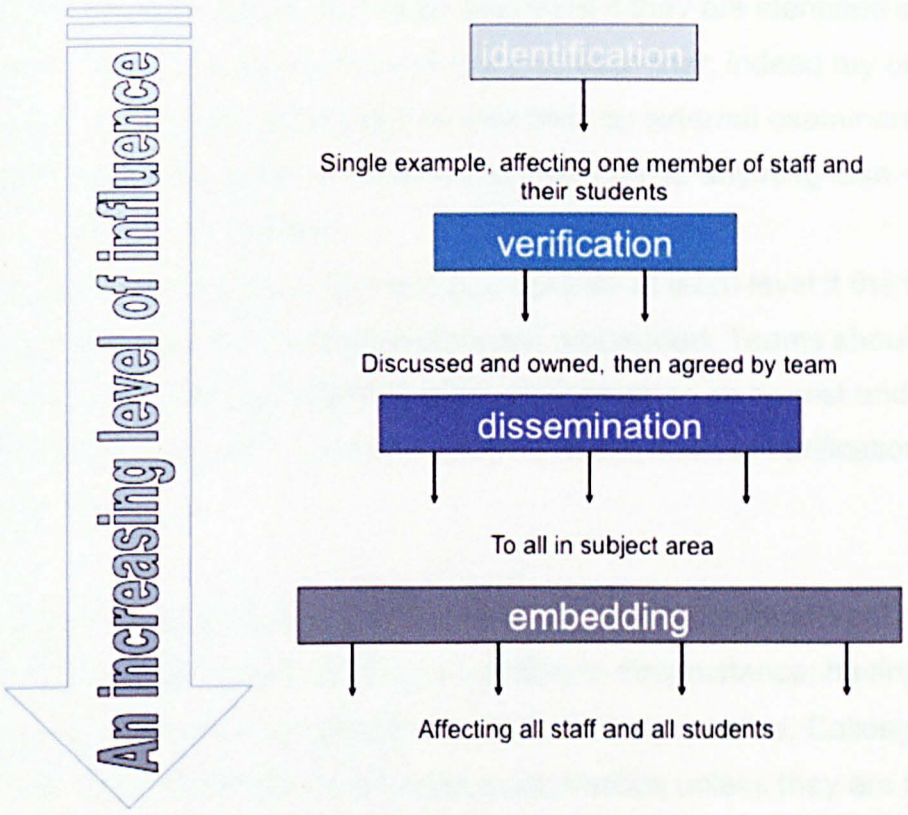

Figure 13. A model showing the stages needed for the effective use of examples of good practice in learning and teaching.

The first stage in the whole process has to be **identification**. As the results of the interviews confirmed, it is often the case that academic colleagues are reticent to put forward examples of their practice as being "good". There is perhaps a view that everyone is doing that already or that upon investigation it will prove to be usual or expected standard practice. As was stated in interview 10, there is a need for trust and a sense of collegiality. Whilst this is perfectly understandable it is worth remembering that a team is not looking for *exceptional* practice and that everyone needs to start from somewhere. I would therefore suggest that it is possible for academic colleagues to use the mechanisms available to them – such as the monitoring systems and the external benchmarks already in use – to identify examples of good practice and thus at least to start a debate.

The second stage in this process is **verification**. It is important that others within a programme team, subject area or faculty accept that which is put forward as good practice as being better than the norm. This does not mean

that any examples should only be promoted if they are identified or supported by an outside agency such as an external examiner; indeed my own experience suggests that practice identified by external examiners is just as likely to be what might be expected or standard as anything else – it simply has a veneer of credibility.
Verification of good practice needs to operate at team level if the examples are to be successfully disseminated and embedded. Teams should have the confidence to discuss ideas/practice put forward in an honest and robust fashion; and it is this discussion which is at the heart of verification, and thus of ownership.

The third stage is to agree on the most appropriate method(s) of **dissemination**. These will vary according to circumstance; having said this, whatever methods are agreed upon need to be *proactive*. Colleagues will not find out about examples of agreed good practice unless they are told where to go to look and also understand that any effort expended on their part will be worth their while. Simply placing examples on a website or in a file, for colleagues to look through when they find the time, will not work effectively. It might be helpful to think of the place where the practice is kept as unchanging, but the means whereby colleagues know what is available, what has changed and what is new as dynamic and multi-directional.

The final stage is **embedding**. It may generate a feeling of well being, a glow of satisfaction, to know that you have been assiduous in identifying, verifying and disseminating examples of good practice, but if it makes little or no difference to the practice of others then I would suggest that the true worth of such effort has to be questioned. Therefore some form of monitoring at an appropriate level needs to occur. This is not about insisting that ideas put forward are implemented or about moving remorselessly towards some kind of standardised `heaven`. Instead it is about seeing whether ideas have been understood and listened to; it is about requesting that there is at least an evaluation of one's own practice in the light of the examples put forward and it is about acting upon this evaluation, if appropriate. It is not meant to be heavy handed, but the implementation of an idea with some understanding of the

effect this has had on learning and teaching might itself be an example of good practice! In this way the loop reinvents itself.

It is accepted that the process described above is only one way of improving the quality of academic practice, with the aim of indirectly impacting positively upon the student learning experience. However it does seem to have the potential to become a powerful one, not least because it may challenge the way in which academic staff working in higher education institutions conceive of their role in order to foreground the teaching and learning aspect. This builds on Boyer's (1990) understanding of the need to redress the balance between teaching and research and thus to develop the scholarship of teaching and links to Prosser et al (2005, p.154) conclusion that academics need to "intentionally engage" in both the scholarship of discovery – their research - and the way that is then delivered to their students. It may also mean a change to a new way of understanding what it is to be a professional academic in higher education today, as Nixon (1996, 2001a, 2001b, 2004) discusses. Fielding (2005, p.56) coins the term "meta-practice" to describe "the way (teachers) think about, evaluate or seek to improve their practice." There is a clear link here to the notion of the "hybrid" professional discussed by I1 in chapter 4 and 5. These views share the aim, even need, to put the student's performance (retention, progression, attainment) at the heart of the HE enterprise; indeed Fielding (2005) sees this as the most important change that needs to occur in the teaching profession. I have discussed the extent to which this drive to improve has always been the case earlier in chapter 3 alongside the key implication that flows from this, which is the possibility that the primacy of the academic subject may be endangered. I would want to argue that a shift to see the identification, validation, dissemination and embedding of good practice in learning and teaching as part of the day-to-day ways of working is a significant move. Wrapped up in this is also the idea that academic colleagues can learn from others in different subject disciplines: there may need to be an act of contextualisation, but learning from the pedagogic practice of others and changing ones own practice as a result are important changes. It is my experience that these changes, however

welcomed they are, will not come about quickly; there is considerable work that would need to be done.

This thesis began by referring to the attempt to capture Bigfoot – that is the attempt to identify examples of good practice in learning and teaching which are shared by different subject disciplines. The primary research undertaken as part of this project has shown that, there is not one creature known by different names but many creatures who may share many similarities: close cousins perhaps but still separate individuals. The primary research has also shown that the different names by which the creatures are known in different places matter to the local inhabitants because they provide local context and identity. Any attempt to see them all as the same denigrates the individual creature and misses the point entirely. Therefore what this research challenges is the notion that there are examples of good practice in learning and teaching that can be adopted (transplanted) successfully into any context without question. This in itself therefore challenges the validity of existing mechanisms such as the Ofsted good practice database run by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service– known as the Excellence Gateway[18] and available at http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk. The same is true of other facilities offered by government agencies such as www.teachernet.gov.uk and the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services (www.nationalcollege.org.uk). What is therefore being challenged by this research is a notion of the educational professional as being no more than what Nixon (2001a, p.181) warns against, the emergence of the "academic worker". According to this view, the worker, once trained (not educated) and given the right examples to follow or use, can be expected to successfully complete their job – that of ensuring specified attainment levels for their pupils/students (not necessarily educating them) – in any context. This seems to be more an 'apprenticeship then craftsman' approach to teaching which ignores the many and various contexts that learners of whatever age bring with them to the learning experience. If one accepts this is the current view of

[18] The name is itself revealing, implying as it does that for anybody entering through this gateway excellence in teaching and learning is a step closer.

the role of the teacher, then it is right that it is challenged and I would be content if this small piece of research added to that challenge.

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Appendix 1: Selected dates in the development of Quality Assurance mechanisms in English Higher Education

Adapted from Silver (1990), Campbell (2004) and added to from other sources.

1945	Percy Committee on *Higher Technological Education* expresses concern that Britain does not have a sufficiently qualified workforce.
1963	Robbins Committee Report on *Higher Education* encourages expansion of the sector. Establishment of the CNAA.
1966	White Paper on *A Plan for Polytechnics and other Colleges.* List of proposed Polytechnics produced in the following year.
1973	CNAA begin to validate courses: the first are in Education
1985	Lindop Committee Report and responses to it.
1986	CNAA consultative document on *Quality and Validation* begins process towards self-regulation by HEIs
1987	Sir Ron Dearing becomes Chairman of CNAA New structure for CNAA approved Institutions invited to apply for accreditation
1989	Designated polytechnics and colleges receive corporate status
1990 - 1992	Academic Audit Unit undertakes institutional audits of pre-1992 universities only
1992	CNAA ceases to exist. Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) begins. Further and Higher Education Act enables former Polytechnics and Colleges of HE to gain University status.
1992 - 1997	HEQC undertakes institutional audits of all higher education institutions in the UK.
1993 - 1995	Quality Assurance division of HEFCE runs 'Quality Assessments'
1995 – 2001	Subject Reviews. HEFCE commissions QAA to run these following its creation in 1997.
1997	QAA comes into existence. Dearing report - National Committee of inquiry into Higher Education

1998 - 2000	QAA 'Continuation Audits'
1998 – 2001	QAA compile Code of Practice, now part of Academic Infrastructure along with Subject benchmarks and Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
2001 – present	QAA Institutional Audits in England
August 2009	House of Commons Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills select committee (IUSS) publishes its report on the 2008-09 session: *Students and Universities*
November 2009	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) publishes its vision for UK HE: *Higher Ambitions.*
2009/10	HEFCE launches review of the Academic Infrastructure and external examiner system.
2011	QAA publish new Institutional Review process following review
2011	New QAA quality assurance methodology, Institutional Review begins

	Also of interest:
1999	*Bologna declaration signed by British government. Bologna process aims to have compatible academic degree standards and quality assurance standards across Europe by 2010.*
2003	*Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) begun by QAA Scotland*
2006	*New version of institutional Audit in England with greater enhancement focus*

Appendix 2: Shared descriptions of good practice in learning and teaching

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Ofsted criteria:	How well do learners achieve?	How effective are teaching, training and learning?	How well do programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners?	How well are learners guided and supported? (6)	How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?
Grade 1 - Outstanding Grade 2 - Good Grade 3 - Satisfactory Grade 4 - Inadequate	Inspectors should evaluate: ■ learners' success in achieving challenging targets, including qualifications and learning goals, with trends over time and any significant variations between groups of learners ■ the standards of learners' work ■ learners' progress relative to their prior attainment and potential, with any significant variations between groups of learners i. the extent to which learners	Inspectors should evaluate: ■ how well teaching and/or training and resources promote learning(1), address the full range of learners' needs and meet course or programme requirements ■ the suitability and rigour of assessment (2) in planning and monitoring learners' progress ■ the identification of, and provision for, additional	Inspectors should evaluate: ■ the extent to which programmes or activities match learners' needs(4), aspirations and potential, building on prior attainment and experience (5) ■ how far programmes or the curriculum meet external requirements and are responsive to local circumstances ■ the extent to which enrichment	Inspectors should evaluate: ■ the care, advice, guidance and other support provided to safeguard welfare, promote personal development and achieve high standards (1) the quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance (6) to learners in relation to courses and programmes, and where applicable, career	Inspectors should evaluate: ■ how effectively self-evaluation is used to secure improvement ■ how well challenging targets are being used to raise standards for all learners ■ how effectively leaders and managers at all levels clearly direct improvement and promote the well-being of learners through high quality care, education and training

	enjoy their work and, where appropriate: ■ the acquisition of workplace skills ■ the development of skills which contribute to the social and economic well-being of the learner ■ the emotional development of learners ■ the behaviour of learners ■ the attendance of learners ■ the extent to which learners adopt safe practices and a healthy lifestyle ■ learners' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development whether learners make a positive contribution to the community	learning needs (3) and, where appropriate the involvement of parents and carers in their children's learning and development.	activities and/or extended services contribute to learners' enjoyment and achievement ■ the extent to which the provision contributes to the learners' personal development and well-being, for example their capacity to stay safe and healthy, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.	progression	■ how well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve their potential ■ the adequacy and suitability of staff, including the effectiveness of processes for recruitment and selection of staff to ensure that learners are well taught and protected ■ the adequacy and suitability of specialist equipment, learning resources and accommodation how effectively and efficiently resources are deployed (8) to achieve value for money and, where appropriate:

					■ how effective are the links made with other providers, services, employers and other organisations to promote the integration of care, education and any extended services to enhance learning and to promote well-being ■ the effectiveness with which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities.
Peer lesson observation[19]					
Clarity of intended Outcomes e.g. ■ The desired outcomes are clear in the	**Planning and organisation e.g.** ■ Student and teacher activities are explicitly	**Content e.g.** ■ The content is appropriate for the students (1,4) ■ The material	**Methods and Approach e.g.** ■ The purpose structure and context of the session is clearly	**Delivery e.g.** ■ The session is opened and concluded effectively ■ Clear	**Student Activity e.g.** ■ Student participation is appropriate to the topic and

[19] These criteria are taken from the lesson observation proforma undertaken by peers, used in my own institution and validated by the HEA. There is no claim here that these are universal criteria although many HEIs have chosen to undergo the same validation process.

session planning ■ The content used is likely to achieve the outcomes ■ Intended outcomes are appropriate to the session (course/module/ level)	planned ■ The designated teaching aids (e.g. audio visual/paper based) are prepared ■ The teaching space is appropriately utilised ■ The needs of the range of students (including those with disabilities) taken into account (3,5) in the planning.	used is factually accurate ■ Examples, analogies, and references to scholarship are appropriate (9)	outlined to the students ■ There is suitable variation of activity to encourage student engagement (1) ■ Activities are effectively timed ■ The available space, audio-visual and electronic aids are used effectively (8) ■ Students are encouraged to engage with and interrogate the material (1)	explanations are given to students ■ Questions to students are challenging and motivating (4) ■ Key points are appropriately summarised *during* the session ■ Key points and conclusions are summarised *at the end* of the session	setting ■ All students, including those with disabilities, have the opportunity to be actively engaged in learning (3) ■ Students are engaged in a variety of activities during the session (1) ■ Where appropriate time is allowed for innovation, for example for students to take the initiative and explore alternative lines of enquiry ■ Time is allowed for assimilation and reflection (7) where appropriate
HEA framework[20]			**Those new to teaching should:**	**Those with a 'substantive role in learning and**	**Those experienced staff with a track record of**

[20] HE institutions determine their own criteria in the application of the standards framework.

				teaching should:	**promoting learning and teaching should:**
Areas of activity 1. Design and planning of learning activities and/or programmes of study (1) 2. Teaching and/or supporting student learning (1,6) 3. Assessment and giving feedback to learners (2) 4. Developing effective environments and student support and guidance (6) 5. Integration of scholarship, research (9) and professional activities with teaching and supporting learning 6. Evaluation of practice and continuing professional development (7) **Core knowledge** Knowledge and understanding of: 1. The subject material (1) 2. Appropriate methods for teaching and learning (4) in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme 3. How students learn, both generally and in the subject 4. The use of appropriate learning technologies (8) 5. Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching (2) 6. The implications of quality assurance and enhancement for professional practice **Professional values** 1. Respect for individual learners (1) 2. Commitment to incorporating the process and outcomes of relevant research, scholarship (9) and/or professional practice 3. Commitment to development of learning communities 4. Commitment to encouraging participation in higher education, acknowledging diversity and promoting equality of opportunity 5. Commitment to continuing professional development and evaluation of practice			"Demonstrate an understanding of the student learning experience through engagement with at least 2 of the 6 areas of activity, appropriate core knowledge and professional values; the ability to engage in practices related to those areas of activity; the ability to incorporate research, scholarship and/or professional practice into those activities "	"Demonstrates an understanding of the student learning experience through engagement with all areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values; the ability to engage in practices related to all areas of activity; the ability to incorporate research, scholarship and/or professional practice into those activities "	"Support and promotes student learning in all areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values through mentoring and leading individuals and/or teams; incorporates research, scholarship and/or professional practice into those activities "

Appendix 3: Ethical clearance documentation and questions for semi-structured interviews with staff

University of Sheffield School of Education
RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION FORM

- This form has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (U-REC) -

Complete this form if your project involves human participants (either directly through physically participating and/or indirectly through providing data and/or tissue) **AND does not involve the NHS.**

A guidance fact sheet on how to complete this form can be downloaded from: www.shef.ac.uk/researchoffice/support/winning/ethics/system.html.

If appropriate, this form must be accompanied by:
A completed Participant Information Sheet
A completed Participant Consent Form
(please confirm the applicability/inapplicability of these on the application form's cover sheet)

Once the form(s) has been completed (and the applicant's name and date inserted into the footer of each page) it should be emailed to: STAFF - The School of Education 'Ethics Administrator' (m.l.hughes@sheffield.ac.uk). STUDENTS: The course secretary . A signed, dated version of 'Part B' of the application form should also be posted to the appropriate person above.

The identity of your Ethics Administrator is at:
www.shef.ac.uk/content/1/c6/03/26/85/ethics_administrators.pdf.

Who should complete this form?
Normally the Principal Investigator in the case of staff-led research projects or normally the student in the case of supervised student research projects.

Special note for projects involving the NHS (including Phase 1 studies involving healthy volunteers):

If your project involves the NHS and/or is a clinical trial of a drug then complete the NHS research ethics application form (commonly known as the COREC form) and send it to the appropriate NHS organisation.

The COREC form is available electronically from the COREC website: www.corec.org.uk
COREC, the *Central Office for Research Ethics Committees*, is the body that manages the NHS's ethics review system.

The NHS's ethics review procedure is explained in a factsheet:
www.corec.org.uk/applicants/help/docs/Guidance_for_Applicants_to_RECs.pdf

The following types of 'research' require ethics review via the NHS:
patients and users of the NHS
relatives or carers of patients and users of the NHS
access to data, organs or other bodily material of past and present NHS patients
fetal material and IVF involving NHS patients
the recently dead in NHS premises
the use of, or potential access to, NHS premises or facilities
NHS staff – recruited as research participants by virtue of their professional role.
Phase 1 studies involving healthy volunteers *

*** The introduction of the EU Clinical Trials Directive (2001/20/EC) into UK law now means that 'Phase 1 studies involving healthy volunteers' (i.e. Clinical Trials of Drugs) must now be ethically reviewed via the NHS and, specifically, by an NHS Research Ethics Committee recognised to ethically review Clinical Trials applications.**

University of Sheffield School of Education
Research Ethics Application Form

Cover Sheet

Name Nick Allsopp

Member of Staff ☐

Student ☑
Course **Ed D**

Module **Part 2**
Tutor/Supervisor **Dr Alan Skelton**

Date **September 2007**

I confirm that due to the nature of the project, in my judgment the use of a 'Participant Information Sheet / Covering Letter / Pre-Written Script' – i.e. use of a method to inform prospective participants about the project (mark 1 box):	
Is relevant:	**Is not relevant:**
✓	

I confirm that due to the nature of the project, in my judgment the use of a 'Participant Consent Form' (mark 1 box):	
Is relevant:	**Is not relevant:**
✓	

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University of Sheffield School of Education Research Ethics Application Form

Part A

A1. Research Project Title: **Using good practice in teaching and learning to improve the student learning experience in Higher Education.**

A1.1 URMS number (if known):

A.2 Contact person **(normally the Principal Investigator, in the case of staff-led research projects, or the student in the case of supervised-student research projects):**

Title: Mr First Name/Initials: Nick Last Name: Allsopp
Post: Department:
Email: nallsopp@btinternet.com Telephone: 0116 2299867

A2.1 Is this a supervised-student research project? Yes

If yes, please provide the Supervisor's contact details:
Dr Alan Skelton, School of Education, Sheffield University, email a.m.skelton@Sheffield.ac.uk

A.3 Other key investigators / co-applicants **(within or outside the University):**

Please list all (adding more rows if necessary)

Title	Full Name	Post	Responsibility in project	Organisation	Department

A.4 Proposed Project Duration:

Start date: October 2007 End date: September 2009

A.5 Mark 'X' in one or more of the following boxes if your research:

	~~involves testing a medicinal product *~~
	~~involves investigating a medical device *~~
	~~involves additional radiation above that required for clinical care *~~
	~~involves taking new samples of human biological material (e.g. blood, tissue) *~~
	involves children or young people aged under 18 years
	~~involves using samples of human biological material collected before for another purpose~~
	involves only identifiable personal data with no direct contact with participants
X	involves only anonymised or aggregated data
	involves prisoners or others in custodial care (e.g. young offenders)
	involves disabled adults with physical or mental incapacity or physical or mental illness

X	has the primary aim of being educational (e.g. student research, a project necessary for a postgraduate degree or diploma, other than an MD or PhD)

A.6 Briefly summarise the project's aims, objectives and methodology?
(It must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)
This project is designed to last for two years and has two strands. The first is designed to investigate the concept of "good practice" in learning and teaching as it applies to the Higher Education sector in comparison the other sectors of education such as further education and the compulsory sector. The aim is to discover whether there is common agreement as to what "good practice" might be and if so how to effectively disseminate and embed this into the work of colleagues.
A second strand will look at government policy in this area. Here the aim is to consider what motivations underpin the current Excellence agenda in the Higher Education sector and to further consider how "good practice" might fit with this.
The methods used in the first strand will be face-to-face semi-structured interviews where possible and/or electronic questionnaires to a group of interested colleagues from across the various sectors of education. I will employ a critical discourse analysis of documents for the second strand of this project.

A.7 What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?
The research plan does not anticipate any physical and/or psychological harm/distress to the participants. The questioning will focus upon participants' opinions on professional issues and will not address personal issues. The method of questioning will be within the range of experiences very familiar to the participants. Indeed it is hoped that the questioning will be enjoyable and beneficial to the participants, allowing them to articulate and have legitimised opinions that might not otherwise be asked for.

A.8 Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project? (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)
No

A.9 How will potential participants in the project be (i) identified, (ii) approached and (iii) recruited?
(i) Participants will initially be identified through the role that they play within their institution. The fact that institutions are designated as Beacon Schools or have Advanced Skills teachers or teacher fellows is publicly available information accessed via, for example, the internet.
(ii) Individual participants will be approached by the use of a general speculative letter of approach to the institution describing the research project and asking for an indication of agreement to participate, together with a request for the contact details of named individuals.
(iii) Named individuals will be recruited following the approach described above and after they have received further details of their role in the project. They will need to respond positively indicating their willingness to become involved.

A.10 Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

YES [X] NO [ ]

Please explain the proposed process for obtaining informed consent. If informed consent or consent is not to be obtained please explain why. You may want to consult Section 2.4.3 of the University's Ethics Policy or the guidance fact-sheet on consent at:

www.shef.ac.uk/r/researchoffice/RO/ethicsreviewsystem.html. Students should ensure that they have fully discussed their proposed procedures with their tutor.supervisor.

Participants will be given documentation as described in A.9 above and will be asked to sign an informed consent form at the commencement of the interview.

A.11 What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?
Only the following personal data will be recorded: name of participant, position, date of interview. I will only refer to the participants using generic job titles; interviews and institutions will be coded to help identify them to the researcher but will not be identifiable within the project report.

A.12 Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided)

YES ☐ NO ☒

University of Sheffield School of Education Research Ethics Application Form

Part B – Declaration

Full Research Project Title: Using good practice in teaching and learning to improve the student learning experience in Higher Education.

I confirm my responsibility to deliver the research project (project) in accordance with the University of Sheffield's (the University) policies and procedures, which include: the University's '*Financial Regulations*'; '*Good Research Practice Standards*'; and the '*Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human Participants, Data and Tissue*' (Ethics Policy) and, where externally funded, with the terms and conditions of the project's external research funder.

In signing this research ethics application form I am also confirming that:

The form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

The project will abide by the University's Ethics Policy.

There is no potential material interest that may, or may appear to, impair the independence and objectivity of researchers conducting this project.

Subject to the research being approved, I undertake to adhere to the project protocol (protocol) without unagreed deviation and to comply with any conditions set out in the letter sent by the University ethics reviewers (reviewers) notifying me of this.

I undertake to inform the reviewers of significant changes to the protocol.

(if applicable) If this is an application for a 'generic' project, all the individual projects that fit under the generic project are compatible with this application.

I am aware of my responsibility to be up to date and comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data, including the need to register when necessary with the appropriate Data Protection Officer (within the University the Data Protection Officer is based in CiCS).

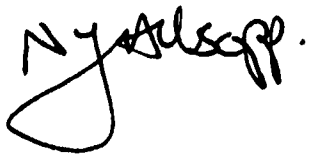
I understand that the project (including research records / data) may be subject to inspection for audit purposes, if required in future.

I understand that personal data about me as a researcher in this application form will be held by those involved in the ethics review process (i.e. the Ethics Administrator and/or reviewers) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.

Name of the Principal Investigator (or Supervisor in the case of a student project):
Dr Alan Skelton

Name of student (if applicable):
Nick Allsopp

Signature of the Principal Investigator (or student and Supervisor in the case of a student project):



Date:
27th November 2007

Ensure that you complete the form in full (including inserting the applicant's name and date in the footer of each page) and sign and date "Part B". If appropriate, enclose a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

The University Of Sheffield.

The School Of Education.

Nick Allsopp

Head of School
Professor Peter Hannon

Department of Educational Studies
The Education Building
388 Glossop Road
Sheffield S10 2JA

Telephone: +44 (0114) 222 8096
Fax: +44 (0114) 279 6236
Email: jacquie.gillott@sheffield.ac.uk

10 December 2007

Dear Nick

Re: Using good practice in teaching and learning to improve the student learning experience in Higher Education

Thank you for your application for ethical review for the above project. The reviewers have now considered this and have agreed that you can go ahead with your research project.

This is subject to receipt of a signed hard copy of Part B (Declaration) of the School of Education Research Ethics application form which is available at http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/education/ethics. This hard copy is then held on file. This ensures that we comply with university requirements about signatures.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Jacquie Gillott
Programme Secretary

Information Sheet for Participation in Research Project.

This Participant Information Sheet is for you to keep and is accompanied by a copy of the signed Participant Consent Form.

1. Research Project Title

Using good practice in teaching and learning to improve the student learning experience in Higher Education.

2. Invitation to participate in research

You are being invited to take part in a research project which forms part of the work I am engaged in as part of my part-time Ed. D at Sheffield University. Before you decide whether to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

3. What is the purpose of the project?

This project is designed to last for two years and has two strands. The first is designed to investigate the concept of "good practice" in learning and teaching as it applies to the Higher Education sector in comparison the other sectors of education such as further education and the compulsory sector. The aim is to discover whether there is common agreement as to what "good practice" might be and if so how to effectively disseminate and embed this into the work of colleagues.
A second strand will look at government policy in this area. Here the aim is to consider what motivations underpin the current Excellence agenda in the Higher Education sector and to further consider how "good practice" might fit with this.

4. Why have I been chosen?

You have been identified through the role that you play within your institution together with the fact that your institution is designated as, for example, a Beacon School or has Advanced Skills teachers or teacher fellows working within it. I am interested in your personal opinions in relation to my research topic but I am also seeking to gain a range of viewpoints across the various education sectors through the aggregation of individual viewpoints.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. Refusal to take part will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form). If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time, without penalty or loss of benefits, and without giving a reason.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

This is time-limited piece of research which will involve one face-to face interview of perhaps one hour, or, if more convenient, the completion of a questionnaire which will be presented to you and returned to me by email.
I will provide you with an electronic version of the questions that will form the basis of the interview in advance and will then arrange to meet with you at a mutually convenient time. Your responsibility, as a participant in this research is to answer the questions as fully as possible. I value your opinions and wish to capture them accurately. Following the interview I will provide you with an electronic copy of my notes so that you are able to confirm that they are an accurate representation of our discussion.

7. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no tangible benefits to the participants in this project I would hope that the discussion will be interesting to all parties and that participants will feel that their views on this topic have been accurately captured and taken account of.

8. What happens when the research study stops?

Whilst I am undertaking the research I will keep all of the notes from the interviews in a locked cabinet. Once the research has been completed and written up I will destroy all of the original notes taken during the interviews but will make a permanent electronic copy of the interviews on CD-ROM for my own records. This will be kept in a locked cabinet and will not be stored on the hard drive of a computer. The CD-ROM will not be made available to any other person. The notes of the interviews will identify the individual but the final report of the project and the case studies will not identify individuals; instead they will use the generic titles identified in (4) above, that is "Academics in HE/FE/School", "senior managers in HE/FE/School" etc

9. What if something goes wrong?

As stated in (8) above I will provide you with an electronic copy of my notes from the interview and ask that you confirm these as accurate. If you are unhappy with these notes I will amend them and return them to you for final confirmation.
Should you be unhappy with the initial questions, the interview or the notes I will amend the relevant document as necessary.
If you are still unhappy with any part of this process you are able to contact my supervisor for this project, Dr Alan Skelton, by email.
If you are still unhappy with any response then the University of Sheffield's Registrar and Secretary is the designated official person responsible for receiving complaints brought against the University. The contact addresses can be found at (13) below.

10. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about you which is disseminated will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised from it and will instead use the generic terms described identified in (4) above, that is "Academics", "senior managers" and "data managers".

11. What will happen to the results of the research project?

As stated above, the results of this research will form the basis of the dissertation I am writing for my doctorate and as such will only be available to my supervisor and, if appropriate, the wider School of Education team at the University of Sheffield. If at a future date I wish to publish my research post thesis this will be subject to the confidentiality noted above.

12. Who has reviewed the project?

This research project has been ethically reviewed by the University of Sheffield Research Ethics Committee/School of Education Ethics Review Procedure.

13. Contact for further information

You may also contact the following:

Project Supervisor:
Dr Alan Skelton
School of Education
University of Sheffield
388, Glossop Road
Sheffield
S10 2JA
tel. (0114) 222 8087
Email: a.m.skelton@Sheffield.ac.uk

The Registrar
University of Sheffield
Western Bank
Sheffield
S10 2TN

Tel. (0114) 222 2000

- Finally, thank you for agreeing to take part in the project! -

Nick Allsopp
De Montfort University
The Gateway
Leicester
LE1 9BH
Email: nallsopp@dmu.ac.uk

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Project:
Using good practice in teaching and learning to improve the student learning experience in Higher Education.

Name of Researcher:
Nick Allsopp
Participant Identification Number for this project:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated *October 2007* for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. ☐

3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. ☐

7. I agree to take part in the above project. ☐

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of Person taking consent (if different from researcher)	Date	Signature
Researcher	Date	Signature

Copies: One copy for the participant and one copy for the Principal Investigator / Supervisor.

Good practice in learning and teaching
Questions for semi-structured interviews with STAFF.

Additional prompts in blue

Definitions and motivations.

1. How would you describe good practice in learning and teaching?
    - Do you think this type of practice is specific to your subject discipline?
    - Can you give examples?
2. In your opinion is good practice the same as competent practice?
    - If so, how?
    - If not, what are the definition and characteristics of each?

Identification.

3. Are there examples of good practice within your own subject discipline?
    - How are these examples identified? By whom?
    - What effect does having such examples have on colleagues in the subject/School/faculty?
    - Is there any sharing or spreading of this expertise?
4. Do you think your conception of good practice is shared by other disciplines?
    - Can we therefore come to a definition which is useful to most/all subject disciplines?
5. Do you think that examples of good practice be transferred? If so how?
    - Can another lecturer pick up and use someone else's ideas and materials?
    - Can this work within the same discipline? In cognate areas? Across different disciplines?
    - Does this challenge/change the individuality of the lecturer? What are your views of this?

Involvement.

6. Have you been involved in any type of activity where good practice is identified and shown to others in order to disseminate it?
    - What role did you play? (Participant? delegate? Other?)
    - Describe the activity.
7. Do these dissemination activities happen regularly?
    - Are they part of a structured programme (of staff development)?
8. Is the sharing of good practice part of the way your subject discipline normally works?
    - Is this way of working part of the "culture" of the subject discipline?

Analysis of impact.

9. In your opinion are such activities as described in 6 above effective in disseminating ideas?
    - How do you make that judgement?
    - What impact do you think these activities have on yourself, your colleagues and your students?
10. Are there generic elements of the good practice you have described that are transferable to your colleagues in different subject disciplines?
    - Have you ever used ideas/approaches described by others (either at the events referred to or elsewhere) in your own practice? With what effect? (i.e. did they transfer?)
11. In your opinion does the identification and dissemination of good practice as discussed have any impact upon student learning?
    - In what ways?
    - How can you tell?
    - Do you measure this impact in any way?

Strategic motivations.

12. What do you think are the main reasons why this university is seeking to identify and share good practice?
    - Tutors' own drive to improve the way they teach?
    - Institutional drive to improve the quality of learning and teaching?
    - External pressure?

Appendix 4: Notes of all interviews as agreed by participants.

Ed. D Research Interviews
Interview no. 1
Date: 3rd November 2008
Faculty: "A"
Role: Head of Department, Chair Faculty Learning & Teaching Committee

How would you describe good practice in learning and teaching?

- When first started teaching would have said good practice in learning and teaching was about supporting individual students so that they could learn and igniting a passion to learn in the discipline. Now it is so much more complex:
  - Now teachers have to consider factors such as the level of the programme; transition to HE issues; providing an introduction to the discipline
  - Good practice now also depends upon the student mix: for example the number of mature students in a group; the student experience in the institution – the use of personal tutors
  - Good practice will also depend on factors such as the level of employability and workplace experience used/expected.
- There is a need to understand the core discipline – through such things as subject benchmarks – but it is now more multi layered.
- Now tutors have to structure their materials and the support they give to help students become learners. This is now less subject-specific than it might have been – it is more diverse, more complex and thus more difficult to identify good practice.
- The HEA for instance identify categories of good practice such as good practice in assessment, in widening participation etc. this seems the only way to cope with this issue.
- Despite the above "good practice' still has some use as a term.
- However teachers don't tend to make much use of ready made resources such as those on the HEA website etc. this is mainly because they are too busy doing their job to look elsewhere for materials.

Are there examples of good practice within your own subject discipline?

- The department now has teams of staff who observe each other and identify examples of good practice. In identifying examples transferability is a key factor.
- It is useful to identify good practice as this has the potential to reduce colleagues' workloads.
- The decision as to what is identified as good practice is left to the subject team. There is an intention to share examples across the faculty at three staff development events and the subject team teams are encouraged to share good practice.
- Although the decision as to what to identify is left with the team it is thought that there are key factors which are generic such as student engagement, student interaction. These are able to be shared across the faculty – outside a subject team's cognate areas.

Have you been involved in any type of activity where good practice is identified and shown to others in order to disseminate it?

- Sharing good practice is useful and there is evidence within the department that staff have changed their practice as a result of some examples of good practice.
    - For example an external input on "Patchwork assessments" has resulted in staff reassessing their practice and adopting this method. This has led to student achievement improving. It has led to a better experience for the students and enabled the staff to mark and provide feedback in a timely manner. This was not the case previously.
    - As a result of this experience staff are to present their progress to the rest of the faculty at a staff development day and explain what they did and how it has helped.

In your opinion does the identification and dissemination of good practice as discussed have any impact upon student learning?

- The staff are not consistent in their use of staff development opportunities: often they go off and undertake staff development (in its widest sense) on their own.
- The department does put on sessions for staff under specific headings or suggests people go to specific session run by others. This is a strategic management of staff development. The aim is to ensure that the majority of people in the department can benefit.
- It is important to gain a 'critical mass' of people for any new initiative to work. However this is important because there is a need for staff to engage with new methods and ideas so as to encourage staff to become multi-taskers, hybrid individuals. This will mean that they are less subject specialists.
- It is felt that subject content can be gained easily because the information is now more readily available from a range of sources.
- The skill therefore is to support students to learn – help them to link pieces of information together. The "core' information connected with subject specialism is less important now than it was say 20 years ago. This view is beginning to be shared across the department. There is an awareness that academics need to have a new skill set, they need to able to work in a multi-disciplinary way.

Are there generic elements of the good practice you have described that are transferable to your colleagues in different subject disciplines?

- It is felt that generic skills/good practice can be shared across the university. HE is now more about teaching at a generic level. There is now an emphasis on the learner's needs and their expectations; it is less about being a specialist.
- Students now come to university understanding how they learn so there is a need for staff to respond to this, which requires generic learning and teaching skills.
- Staff within the department are open to finding out new ways to learn from other non-cognate areas. There are still a small core of staff who don't agree with this approach but these are becoming increasingly marginalised.
- There is a need to learn from others otherwise one's skills begin to diminish.

- Equally students' expectations have changed – there is now a demand for a certain level of service from an institution.
- SENDA/DDA4 and the concept of "reasonable adjustment" has made generic demands on staff, even if they do need to be contextualised within the subject.

What do you think are the main reasons why this university is seeking to identify and share good practice?

- The university wants an understanding of the wider context within which it operates and encourages its staff to learn from one another. This includes collaborative working such as staff to staff and staff to student.
    - For example HLS are now looking at assessment in a different way because AAD found that the Patchwork assessment approach works for them. HLS will contextualise the approach for themselves and their subjects but there will be common features to be found within the faculty and across the two faculties.
- Staff sometimes need to get out of the box they are in re thinking about, say, assessment. It is a management responsibility to offer staff opportunities to change.
- Does this approach deprofessionalise staff? No, instead it provides staff with a wider set of skills. Professionalism in HE has always been seen as subject-specific, but perhaps there is a need to recast what it is to be a professional. It is no longer possible (or appropriate?) to "dig deep" (R. Sennett, 2008, The Craftsman) as it is quite possible that this might mean digging the wrong hole!
- Because students have changed staff need to change and teaching and learning needs to change.
- Staff would benefit from taking some content out of the curriculum and building in time to get to understand (and react to) students as learners. Changes in student learning styles need to be facilitated in the classroom.

Other

- Academics don't seem to like working together, especially across subject disciplines. It is difficult to know why this is. Perhaps world views are different? Perhaps there is an issue of subject status?
- there is a need for individual academics to feel that they will gain from working across disciplines. This is true in other sectors of education as well.

Despite all of the above personal factors are still important for student success, it is still about connecting with students, about igniting a flame.

Ed. D Research Interviews
Interview no. 2
Date: 5th November 2008
Faculty: "C"
Role: Lecturer in Pharmacy and Faculty e-Learning Coordinator

Is it possible to define good practice in Pharmacy?

- A definition of good practice might be "creating situations to encourage/stimulate students to learn independently and maximise their potential." This might apply to many disciplines.
- Classroom techniques should attempt to put this definition into place although these might vary according to the discipline. Good practice should avoid techniques that enable students to simply absorb information. There is a need to challenge students – a need to encourage them to want to learn. This might be described as effective practice.

Are there examples of good practice within your own subject discipline?

- Staff in HE tend to work alone, in boxes. This doesn't encourage cross fertilisation (of approaches and techniques)
- Although academics worked in teams they don't usually share good practice. The reasons for this might be to do with time to meet. But academics don't always get on with one another. The team ethic is not always consistent with being an academic. E.g. approaches to marking – use of negative marking.
- There is also little pressure on academics to share good practice. The institution is less interested in (improving) quality than in "bums on seats". There are systems to enable students to progress but not to safeguard standards.
- Some staff haven't thought about what good practice is. They are more interested in getting students through. [in this subject the comments from the external examiner will help force this issue]. Good practice is not just about getting students to pass.
- Some staff want "a quiet life" or are apprehensive of getting into trouble if they don't pass a certain number of students.
- This is a real pressure on staff but it is also a relatively new phenomenon. This may be because the university is now recruiting students who wouldn't have gort into HE previously.
- There is then a pressure to get these students through anyway and this often doesn't involve the students learning for themselves. The students "want it on a plate" and the staff feel a pressure to take these students and to get them through, especially in year 1

Do you think your conception of good practice is shared by other modules/disciplines?

- Not really
- However e-learning is a more generic. Here it is possible to identify factors for individuals to try to use although there is often not the opportunity for staff to share.

Have you been involved in any type of activity where good practice is identified and shown to others in order to disseminate it?

- The sharing of good practice at events/conferences (such as the e-learning Symposium) is personally enjoyable and is about "being helpful"
- Agreeing to present a workshop is often because others have said something is good practice. The presentation of practice at such events is done neutrally- it is not identified as "good" but it is presented in the hope that others will find it useful.
- Most presenters take this approach. Most academics are reticent to blow their own trumpet and therefore perhaps there is not enough sharing.
- The issue about lack of opportunity to share may be a "system issue' but it might also be a cultural issue. Although academics are more likely to get on with their work alone they also want to know what they have to do to get jobs done [an instrumental approach].
- Sharing good practice in situations such as the one described is also about participants deciding if an example of practice is useful to them.
- An example of practice might get adopted by others because it might save the individual time in the long term; it might enrich the student learning activities; it might save the tutor some hassle.
- For example an example of good practice in e-Learning might be about using e-learning to eventually aid student learning but in many examples it is also popular with the students: as such it motivates them. Motivation helps the student become an enriched learner.
- Within pharmacy a level of detail and accuracy might be considered to be good practice because it is part of what makes the subject credible in the eyes of others.

What do you think are the main reasons why this university is seeking to identify and share good practice?

- The university puts money into activities that share good practice because of external pressure such as the QAA Audit. There is a need/expectation to be seen to be doing this. This might also be through a fear/lack of confidence/fear of litigation.

The granting of appeals over issues such as cheating and getting students passed is also part of this process. One has to ask whether it is worth trying to keep up standards as these actions are not doing the students a service ultimately as they will not be equipped to cope in the future. It also demotivates the students who do work assiduously and play by the rules. They tell staff this in the SSCC.

Ed. D Research Interviews
Interview no. 3
Date: 11th November 2008
Faculty: "D"
Role: Head of Department, Head of Performing Arts Centre of Excellence (PACE)

How would you describe good practice in learning and teaching in your subject?

- It is possible to identify good practice in the performing arts. It is concerned with the relationships between the tutor and the learner; it is about ways of presenting, interacting and communicating with students in an on-going relationship that is sustained over time (this continuity is important)
- It is also about the tutor being seen, and seeing themselves, as a learner as well as a facilitator. This sends a signal to the student that learning is a journey.
- The roles of teacher, director and facilitator are very closely related: all have an end point in mind (for a module, a session or a production) but the creative process doesn't have a precise end point, instead it is about engaging in the creative process with the student.

Do you think that examples of good practice be transferred? If so how?

- This approach/vision of good practice is transferable to other subject areas.
- There are problems with transferring across disciplines because other disciplines have different traditions regarding the transmission of information, the use of space and the teaching tools used.
- Some directors will also have rigid views of the outcome they are looking for and will want to rehearse in order to enable the director to get the vision they want. Others will work in a "task-based way" where they set a framework but also set a series of tasks (problems) for the actors.
- This difference presents a different conception of ownership and of the idea of a (learning) journey.
- The idea of trying new ideas and techniques from other disciplines is greeted with fear (although this emotion can be played with to gain the outcome that is wanted). This is often because it is concerned with presenting alternative ways of transmitting knowledge, and this can be unsettling.

- Some directors will challenge their performers by setting them tasks which are "a head above" where the performer is currently. To do this successfully there is a need to establish where the students are currently and then establish a framework for learning which allows (enables?) them to grow. This will need to be done rigorously and it is concerned with challenging the individual. Such an approach may prove more difficult with large numbers in a lecture hall.

Is the sharing of good practice part of the way your subject discipline normally works?

- Across the subject team the views concerning this "holistic approach to learning" are shared, as well as with other cognate areas. The idea of valuing the emotional response to the same extent as other (perhaps cognative) responses and of wanting the student to literally embody this approach to learning are discussed but there is some resistance to such an approach.
- A specific project – the reflective practitioner project – did allow this sharing to take place through the use of specific workshops but this is not done as a matter of course.
- This may be due to lack of time in the day-to-day work tutors are involved in.
- There is a need to create structures that will allow the sharing of good practice. Existing structures do not accommodate this; instead they are more about sharing/disseminating information not engaging with (pedagogic) issues.
- For this sharing to occur there is a need to put one's colleagues in the position of the learner. This is hard to do; it is hard to find the time but should be prioritised.
- There are few opportunities to see colleagues or those outside of one's own discipline teach. This is a disappointment. It is often because there are too many other things to do and such activity is not structured into the timetable.
- However within Drama and Performing Arts there is lots of team teaching so there is more opportunity to observe others and to learn.

What impact do you think these activities have on your students?

- There is a positive impact upon students because it is easy for tutors to get stuck on a treadmill and to teach in the same, established way.
- It is brave to try new things, things that might fail.
- There is a need to be open to new things and not to know the answers.
- HE has a strange rhythm to the year: there are long periods with no teaching and it is therefore brave to take risks. Most staff tend to know their limits and keep to them.
- Thinking about good practice is also about making new ideas/approaches less threatening.
- Giving people something to hold on to so that they can try new things involves 'a leap of faith' but there is a need to challenge people's approach/position. This can happen be example and this can be inspirational.
- It is important to actively engage people so that they feel that they are participating/contributing to the process (rather than passively receiving ideas/information)

What do you think are the main reasons why this university is seeking to identify and share good practice?

- Many outside agencies – HEA, NTFs, CETLs, QAA institutional audit etc all expect to see the sharing of good practice.
- It also helps to recognise individuals and to shape their careers. It also helps to redress the balance between research and teaching & learning.

- Work in teaching & learning might lead to publication but there is some doubt that it affects the practice of others.

- Individual academics are more likely to change their practice as a result of a personal experience/interaction. Dissemination of good practice is not enough as an isolated exercise.
- The best way to change practice is over a sustained period of time not in a one-off session.
- However the embodied dissemination of good practice sits outside of the traditional models of passing on knowledge. It is also difficult for such an approach to work with other means of judging/auditing which don't operate in the same way.
- In order to value learning & teaching one needs to be aware of different views and approaches (in order to reconsider one's own view/approach)

Ed. D Research Interviews
Interview no. 4
Date: 2nd December 2008
Faculty: "C"
Role: Chair of Faculty Learning & Teaching Committee; Teacher Fellow

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Is it possible to define good practice in learning and teaching in Nursing and Midwifery?

- It is possible to define good practice in learning and teaching in this subject discipline: it would be underpinned by key teaching characteristics such as
    - Contextualisation – although there is still debate over what constitutes 'nursing knowledge' the context for that knowledge is vital
    - Integrating theory with practice
    - Tapping into the student experience

Are there examples of good practice within your own subject discipline?

- Nursing and midwifery education (as opposed to training) is about facilitating understanding.

Do you think your conception of good practice is shared by other disciplines?

- This view is not shared by all tutors in Nursing and midwifery. Some for instance see it as the student or nurse's role to make the connections (between theory and practice)

Have you been involved in any type of activity where good practice is identified and shown to others in order to disseminate it?

- Teams do meet to consider good practice in learning and teaching particularly at module level. In some cases the module leader will have a "vision" and share this with colleagues and take account of their comments. This is not universal however and some module leaders do not ask others for their views.
- It is important for all those who teach on a module to buy into any model used and those who are reticent are encouraged to engage. This work is most often done by the module leader. Where the team work together this gets known by others (working on the programme?) and there is a ripple effect which makes dissemination more likely.
- Modules should be creative and developmental and curriculum development should be constant so that the ownership of the curriculum is also clear. One consequence should be that module teams are better able to see where their work fits with others on the programme.

In your opinion are such activities as described in 6 above effective in disseminating ideas?

- There is some transfer of good practice from one module to another, especially in terms of resources and approaches. This is also true of a transfer to other programmes or even different professions (within Nursing and Midwifery)
- There is also some transfer of good practice to other areas of the faculty, for example where there is a mimicking of clinical practice and an emphasis on inter-professional education.
- The faculty structure inhibits this transfer of innovation though and any work of this sort has to be informal arrangement.

Are there generic elements of the good practice you have described that are transferable to your colleagues in different subject disciplines?

- It is thought that there may some scope for the transfer of approaches to other faculties – for example Drama students may benefit from adopting some of the approaches – but this has not yet happened.
- The idea of using ideas from other subject areas is accepted and has indeed occurred, for example the use of "post-it" notes for students to give feedback and to gain a quick idea of what students want.
- Good practice showcases are useful but do not appear to be marketed in a way which attracts participants. Faculties should take ownership of delivering showcases.
- Academic mentors exist in the School of N&M and these help staff bounce ideas off each other. They act as a critical friend and aid the sharing of ideas. This system is well established in the School.

In your opinion does the identification and dissemination of good practice as discussed have any impact upon student learning?

- The sharing of good practice does have an effect upon students – they are better engaged in the module: student expectations are raised; assessment is improved; students feel part of the process of the module.
- as a result students want to know why an idea in operation elsewhere is not available to them. (this adds pressure to adopt these approaches?)
- There is sharing of good practice at a university level, for example module teaching has been filmed and shown elsewhere as an exemplar. This has been used to move practice from the minority to the majority of modules.
- However transferring good practice needs resources and these are not always available.

- Staff are on the whole receptive to other ideas and are not forced to take them on board.

- Staff will accept examples of good practice (from others) but they do need to be open to the idea (of other ways of working being useful). There is still a need to convince some staff more than others, a need to sell the benefits.

- It is also important to ensure that it is not implied that other/previous ideas or practice are wrong or ineffective. Instead it is important to offer other examples of practice as different, innovative and worth trying. The use of the term "good" might be the problem here, but that also might be true of any individual term used.

- Student feedback so far is that they enjoy the way in which colleagues share their practice. They give very honest feedback and some of the things they complain about are outside of the tutor's control – such as timetabling etc.

Ed. D Research Interviews
Interview no. 5
Date: 2nd December 2008
Faculty: "F"
Role: University e-Learning Coordinator

Is it possible to identify good practice in teaching and learning in e-learning?

- It is possible to identify poor practice in e-learning – that would be where the tutor uses e-learning as a "life jacket" (a way of surviving, staying afloat?) as opposed to using technology to mirror where the student is.
- Technology can enhance, extend and empower students. Some students might find that threatening. However for RH anything that doesn't empower students, even if it is creative and/or innovative, is not good practice.
- Although staff (RH) might see something as innovative practice it is the students who finally decide if something is 'good" (useful? Helpful?). Tutors shouldn't try to decide what is good.
- "good practice has to be something which is appropriate, not necessarily cutting edge but effective." cutting edge might be seen as more interesting to students but often requires "scaffolding" for students...
- Not using technology might be effective practice in some situations but to deny technologies completely is probably bad practice. Denying technology is not the same as deciding not to use it in a particular context however.
- thus good practice has to be in context, be appropriate and have support attached.
- (good practice in) e-learning should not be tool driven – although others think that it should be 9this equates to a "top tips' approach). Instead it is the fusing together of tools that enhance the student experience. It is important to start with the issues and see what tools might make a difference. This is a view which differs from most of the e-learning community, where most people are interested in "top tips" and the effective use of (new) tools.
- Because e-learning cuts across all disciplines it makes it harder and less appropriate to make subject-based decisions about what is "good" practice. Poor practice can be identified as using technology only to transmit knowledge rather than enabling and engaging. This is true irrespective of the quality of the produce used to transmit. The converse is also true – that hastily produced products with the right philosophy behind them can be 'good"

How would you describe good practice in learning and teaching in your subject?

- For some staff e-learning is now about enhancing the learning and teaching but this requires a common knowledge, probably picked up from one's own work and from sharing with others.
- It is now becoming possible to talk about the practice and not the technology.

- Good practice in e-learning might be different from other subjects but it might not be. More "traditional" subjects might still identify good practice that fits with the principles of engaging, extending and empowering the learner.
- The context and the ways of thinking might be different but the aims and the skills will be the same. The same big decisions about learning and teaching still have to be made and technology should enable these to be taken.

Is there agreement over what constitutes good practice?

- With any community of tutors involved with e-learning there are various views as to what constitutes "good" practice. It depends upon the subject context and depends upon demands from other actors (such as PSRBs).
- Student views and the views of colleagues are a major voice in shaping practice. The programme team is the level at which change occurs because this is where there is a shared understanding of what education in that context is about. Peer pressure is significant in changing practice.
- Within any team there will be varieties of practice depending upon the development of the team but students need to know what to expect, what the teaching and learning strategies are and what is deemed to be appropriate (is this the same as competent practice?)

Do you think that examples of good practice be transferred? If so how?

- Within a faculty there (is more likely to be) buy-in to identifying good practice if the Dean leads and puts investment in. the investment needs to be people-based. If the structures and the leadership and good people acting as peers/mentors are present then sharing will take place.

Why try to share good practice?

- Sharing tools and approaches – even if they are already known, but not used – helps staff rethink their practice and thus think about how to enhance the student experience. It is necessary to be exposed to other people's work in order to rethink.
- It is necessary to see what is effective elsewhere in order to ask if it will be useful in one's own context. RH would not tell people what to do (what practice to adopt) as the good practice has to be owned. It is not helpful to use "should".
- However as long as students are achieving and gaining the appropriate experience there is no requirement to adopt technologies seen elsewhere.
- In order to use good practice from elsewhere it is necessary to present the information, for there to be a willingness to engage in discussion, a willingness to consider and adopt if necessary/appropriate.
- (adopting) Effective practice might make the student experience more enjoyable, more interactive, more appropriate to our times (the historical context); student achievement is secondary to these but engagement with the former might enhance the latter – but it might not.

A holistic approach to education might mean more empowerment/engagement and then greater achievement.

Ed. D Research Interviews
Interview no. 6
Date: 8th December 2008
Faculty: "E"
Role: Head of Studies, Chair of FLTC

Is it possible to identify good practice in learning and teaching in your subject area of mathematics/computer science?

- Good practice is that which enables the student to learn. There may be general guidelines for what that might be, including encouraging student participation, active learning, "making students want to do things"
- It is necessary to have a level of understanding of the subject in order to think how to teach a particular topic. Despite this academics are individuals and therefore don't always have the same views (of how to teach a topic).
- For example in pure maths there may be different ways of assessing the same basic concepts than in, say, computing science.
- Module tutors will have discussion about how to deliver the topic. [is this about context?]
- Most staff will come together and produce a compromise agreement about the way to approach delivery and assessment. This might not necessarily be a best practice model as it needs to depend upon a particular student cohort or topic. The best way is always context-specific – i.e. what is best for these students in this situation.

Is it useful to share examples of good practice?

- Sharing good practice is useful as it helps staff see the general ideas about any situation. However one can't *mindlessly* transfer practice to other lecturers/topics/students.
- Sharing good practice is often achieved via team teaching, where there is a genuine interaction and discussion about delivery and assessment plans. By dint of working together people are committed to make things work. There is thus a shared understanding of the type of students (and their needs) and how to change to accommodate these.
- Peer observation also helps to share good practice; it helps to pick up ideas informally.
- The moderation of exams also helps to pick up good practice and helps with the sharing of the same.

Is there any sharing of good practice across the faculty?

- This occurs occasionally but not frequently.
- There is a faculty pedagogic interest group who share ideas; the same is true of e-learning, as organised by the e-learning coordinator. However most people share within the same team.
- The further that members of staff have to travel – mentally, symbolically as well as physically – then the less likely this sharing is to occur.
- This is true of working across faculties, however there are teams within Technology who do teach on modules in, for example, Music

Technology and they do meet and talk about matters of joint interest. Here the teams do work and cooperate together by sharing facilities and approaches.

- At a university level there is even further to travel and therefore less likelihood of participation. For this to be encouraged there has to be a focus and it has to be seen as relevant. Finding times for this to occur is difficult. Staff meetings are also difficult to arrange so they either take place a number of times (to cover most members of staff) or communication is by other means (electronic?)

Are there individuals within the faculty with the responsibility for sharing/exchanging good practice?

- The e-learning coordinator/deputy chair of FLTC does organise seminars etc to share good practice.
- The teacher fellows are also a group who are aware of good practice and as a result individuals do approach them and are encouraged so to do.
- Problematic ideas are discussed with others to contextualise and make sense of them.
- The e-learning champions as also seen as role models who people can approach
- There is "moderate take up' of these opportunities/people because of pressures on the timetable and issues of location.

Is there any take up of ideas presented nationally?

- Generic ideas can be found and disseminated but when an actual topic is to be addressed it needs to be "earthed" therefore general workshops are not always relevant, in terms of the types of students and the ways of delivering.
- Therefore there is a need to have faculty-specific workshops with facilitators who understand the context of the subjects.
- Although the Computing staff work well with Engineering colleagues there is still a need to contextualise.
- There is a need to have both, and be aware of both the specific and the generic levels (in order to make an informed decision as to what is useful in a particular context).

Ed. D Research Interviews
Interview no. 7
Date: 10th December 2008
Faculty: "D"
Role: Historian, National Teacher Fellow, Head of Faculty taught postgraduate provision

- It is possible to identify good practice in learning and teaching in History.
- Good practice would be seen as "generally something which enhances and improves student (learning)"
- Ways of working that were linked to the qualities of mind that are described in the History benchmark statement would be seen as good practice if they could show that these methods were having an effect upon student thinking
- Thus it is helpful to identify particular practices/methods which enable the tutor demonstrate that they are working with the benchmark statements.
- The level of generality contained within the benchmark statement s are therefore seen as helpful.

- It is not certain if these views of good practice are shared across the subject, however since the benchmark statement is used by historians to shape the curriculum there is perhaps an "implied consensus" even if this is not overtly articulated.

- The History team do not discuss approaches/methods as such but they do review the curriculum – and this might be looking at a broad theme within the curriculum or it might be a technical aspect of the curriculum, and as such this could be described as sharing good practice

- Occasionally members of the History team will engage in a wider arena to discuss good practice in learning and teaching, but no means all of the team will get involved in this.
    - This might be because Historians are inward rather than outward looking, they might not consider their practice is transferable, [even with generic themes such as the links between research and teaching].
    - It might be because Historians consider that there are "strict disciplinary boundaries" which make their methods/approaches of limited relevance to other disciplines: it might be possible to pick out some general principles but in doing so there is a danger of "distorting the specific context". As such there is a reluctance to place things in the public arena.

- Historians are willing to listen to colleagues from other disciplines but are more willing to listen to other historians first because there is a sense of community with other historians.

- They might work with colleagues in other cognate areas close to historians but this is "another layer of separation" and as such is of less direct relevance.
- Having said this there are some issues which cut across disciplines, such as the HE context, the nature of the student intake, the level of resources, but these engender a different type of discussion.

- The idea of a university approach to learning and teaching is of an interest to the subject team because such ideas are by definition more generalised. There is too much work needed to think about an idea/approach/method from another area, sift it, think how to apply to the specific situation and then transfer it. Instead it is easier to take something from other historians.
    - There is also more implicit trust in what other historians might suggest as they are practitioners operating in the same field. Thus there is a greater willingness to try or accept things other historians might suggest.

- As a National Teacher Fellow the impetus is to improve one's own students' (learning) experience, then if others find that approach helpful that is a bonus.
    - Those who take ideas on for themselves have a responsibility to contextualise them for themselves.
- The NTF remit is within the subject first of all. There is a need for quite a lot of confidence to work across disciplines
- Other subject based NTFs (probably) share a similar view where as those with a central relit might see things differently.

- Often the development of ideas/approaches and where people learn is at the individual (subject) level. Team teaching can help here because it is within a known context. As such it can have a sustained impact upon the practice of others. Collegiality is the best way to unlock/swap ideas; this does not have to operate at a team level can be peer-to-peer.

- As stated, for good practice from elsewhere to be adopted it needs to be contextualised within one's own subject. The subject discipline is important because it is a way of inducting students in to a community of scholars who define themselves in one way, think and write in a certain way and therefore this will affect the willingness to accept the work of other historians rather than other subjects.
    - This is part of teaching people to become historians and as such might be seen as a process of self-replication.

Ed. D Research Interviews
Interview no. 8
Date: 15th December 2008
Faculty: "B"
Role: Head of Marketing Department, Chair FLTC

Is it possible to identify good practice in learning and teaching in your subject discipline?

- In marketing it is all about understanding what the (customer) student needs are; not all students are the same and therefore a generic statement would be an anathema to someone in marketing.
- There is also recognition that other stakeholders exist, such as staff, managers, administrators, the government, and this therefore stops the identification of a generic statement being an easy process. There is a danger of over generalising.
- However some degree of generalisation is necessary, as one cannot personalise learning completely. It is possible to find certain groups of students who exhibit the same characteristics and it is therefore possible to identify good practice for that group.

Do you discuss/share good practice with your colleagues?

- This depends upon how much staff are involved in the pedagogic aspects of the subject [because some are concern primarily with research]. There used to be a specific concern with delivery of the subject and staff were recruited on that basis. Now however there is a large spectrum of staff covering all aspects of teaching and learning and research. This is to be valued.
- [Perhaps as a consequence of this] there are few discussions about good practice in learning and teaching. However these discussions do go ahead "in the background". When the issues are raised it is usually in a bureaucratic sense rather than a philosophical one. It often comes to the fore if a problem arises that needs to be solved.
- Discussions about L&T are also often stimulated by other processes such as periodic review and validation.

Do you think you learn from the good practice of others?

- Learning from other disciplines and one's own is seen as a "good thing" but it doesn't always happen.
- Involvement in staff development [in L&T] at a local or institutional level is small. This is not an unwillingness to take part and it is not about thinking that one cannot learn from others but there is an increasing challenge on staff time – especially on "non-academic" issues such as student attendance, dealing with increasing numbers of students, adapting to blended learning etc together with the need to find to time to prepare.

- When faced with new needs staff [usually] ask for training or time. However when thinking about a learning and teaching issue [e.g. lecturing to large groups] then staff tend to get on with it themselves.

They may see it as a weakness to ask for help/guidance so they don't ask.
    - They may feel that they should know. They may see it as a slight on their professionalism to have to be "expedient." Yet it was agreed that being a professional might be about taking on board new ideas and changes, but they have to balance this against the need to do other jobs, including keeping up with developments in the subject.
    - There is also the question of whether the training offered will be of any use: will the trainers be expert enough to help? Will the staff development sessions be "facilitatory' rather than the deliverer being an expert. In this case it can be seen as like "the blind leading the blind' which may not help.
    - Therefore staff development sessions [in L&T] are not always seen as positive or helpful.

Do staff in the subject put themselves forward to become involved in L&T staff development sessions?

- No. This may be for a range of reasons, including lack of time.
- There have been attempts to have regular showing of good practice within the team but these were dropped as they didn't seem to be a good idea and other events elsewhere seemed to do the same job.
- The fact that staff in the department are geographically dispersed does mean that the team don't have a chance to get together to share good practice.

- Staff would get together to share their subject research but again this would not happen very often, perhaps because it is not a research-driven department.

The interviewee also has a role as Chair of the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee.

- In this role many "show'n'tell" events have been organised e.g. tricks of the Trade.
- These will continue but there is a need to find new ways to encourage staff to attend.
- For the FLTC there is the challenge of enacting strategies etc. often this is carried out in different for a (e.g. Heads of Study) and therefore there is the opportunity to encourage people to take responsibility for [learning & teaching] projects.
- The challenge is still around dissemination and adoption. Money/time needs to be allocated to this to enable it to occur. Sharing is relatively easy but adoption is much harder and only takes place in small steps.
- There is a process of finding good practice then showing others then adopting. This last stage is the hardest ands needs researching into to see where this might take place and how.

- It would be wrong to make all staff into standardised "identikit" teachers but although standardising creates consistency it might also deny individual staff expertise and skills.

- This conversation has focused on the idea of delivery, but learning and teaching is more than just that, it is also about assessment, personal tutoring and support etc. and these also need to be addressed.

Ed. D Research Interviews
Interview no. 9
Date: 18th December 2008
Faculty: "G"
Role: Head of Academic Professional Development Unit

Can good practice in learning and teaching be identified?

- Across the university there is haphazard identification of good practice: teams can and do work together to share good practice. Peer observation helps with this process of sharing.
- What constitutes as good practice is not shared by all: for example some staff consider good practice as being up-to-date (for example in the use of e-learning) whilst for others good practice might be about engaging the student. These are not mutually exclusive.
- It is possible to think of an underpinning definition of good practice: that which helps students to engage and want to learn more.
- There is not the evidence that across the faculties sharing of good practice occurs as a matter of course.
- The teams have to see some point in sharing good practice: perhaps it stops teams reinventing wheels – and maybe a better wheel can be produced. If teams' creative energies are used to share this may help to build and improve practice.
- There may be no individual 'thing' that is defined as good practice but it might be about what is right in a particular context: it is thus subject and student specific.
- There is often a split between those academic staff who look only for subject-specific solutions and those who see the possibility of generic ideas that can help all students, irrespective of specific needs (e.g. mature students vs. 18 year olds). This latter group of staff can find generic aspects in examples of good practice that will fit the needs of most students.

How might good practice be developed and shared?

- Most staff want good practice to feel specific and specialised. Students and staff need to see things in context – usually of the subject.
- There is a need to develop networks to enable staff to understand and value what all colleagues are engaged in across the university. Combined with this is the need to encourage the development of (subject?) teams to encourage a focus on delivery of good practice within the subject.
- Networks become symbols of the possibility of sharing and using good practice. Such networks cannot be prescribed but can be enabled.
- Such networks should be fluid and energised but with an ethos of value.
- Networks usually need to have a driver and always need to be made up of people with a shared concern or interest.

Teacher Fellows.

- The teacher fellows is such a network. All have been identified as being good or excellent. Some TFs take on an ambassadorial role,

some a management function, some champion specific types of good practice, some champion subject-based good practice. One of the problems of the TF network is that although all have an interest in good practice and its development there is a huge diversity in approach – thus the network is not as dynamic as it might be. Additionally in the past there was more resource to drive the network in that it was a large part of the responsibility of one member of staff. PIGs (Pedagogic interest groups – led by teacher fellows in faculties with a cross university umbrella which arranges occasional meetings and workshops - seem to be emerging as more dynamic networks)

The future

- A vision for the future might be of the university drawing on different types of networks (SIGs etc) in order to promote and disseminate good practice. Some sort of structure will be necessary for this creativity to happen. It will be necessary to facilitate communication, but this is vital since by putting people in touch with one another you empower and enable them – help them to use their time more effectively.
- An alternative might be to help subject teams to improve alone. This would mean teams could help their own students immediately: practice would be immediately relevant and would not need contextualising.
- However what would be lost is the interaction between subjects. Also subjects are changing very quickly and new subjects are emerging (e.g. forensic computing).
- To concentrate only on the subject might not lead to as much innovation in the long term
- Networks as described above have the advantage of enabling links to be made that wouldn't other wise occur. This might be a high risk but it has the potential of greater rewards.
- This conception is probably of use to all HEIs. Some types of HEI may be more autonomous and less corporate (than DMU) but this approach can also work across programmes and departments as well as across faculties and the institution as a whole.
    - Too often though the issue of ownership gets in the way and networks might be a way to enable all sorts of curriculum development to occur

- Good practice is different from competent practice. Competent practice is that which is just good enough at the time (for that situation). Good practice looks forward, reflects and tries to improve. This might be trying to improve the student learning experience and ways of seeing, it might be done only for the individual or it might be about leading others.

Are there any links between what has been discussed at the HEA Professional Standards?

- The HEA professional standards do not offer much inspiration or allow for much creativity
- Being an HEA Fellow seems to be more about competence rather than inspiration

- The Professional standards don't pick out inspirational colleagues but the NTF standards seem to do this job.

Ed. D Research Interviews
Interview no. 10
Date: 6th January 2009
Faculty: "B"
Role: Head of School of Law

Is it possible to define good practice in learning and teaching in your subject?

- Yes. For example if the teacher "feels" the session has gone well and they are getting a good response from the students
- Student feedback – formal and informal – student interest/comment/questions all show an engagement
- External indicators such as EE reports.

Is it possible to define the characteristics of good practice?

- No, because to do so is to get caught up in a specific way of thinking/acting.
- It is not [sensible] to "write off" any specific practice. Instead one should think what it is you are trying to achieve and then how to achieve it. This is true of all levels of engagement: from the course level (less specific) to the individual session (very specific).
- The best way to get students to learn, understand, do, improve depends upon the context; and specifically the students – the type and their background.
- There is a need to consider the teaching methods that the students are used to and their previous experiences.
- Innovation might not always be what is required: it depends upon the students' needs, their expectations and the course needs. For example, some students are better at working independently and so can work in different ways.

Are these views shared by your colleagues?

- Ideas and ways of approaching the identification of good practice are discussed at staff meetings and away days. Sharing best practice is a standing item and teaching and learning is a focus at away days. There are also monthly staff development sessions that consider aspects of teaching and learning.
- The team talks about ideas that work and how they might adapt these to other areas of the provision.
- Peer observation is also a way of sharing good practice.
- Energetic and dynamic developments such as these help stop a vacuum being created – where you don't tend to look outside of your own subject area.

Do colleagues use ideas/approaches from other areas?

- Individuals and teams would and do gain from learning about what happens in other subjects in the faculty and the wider university.
- They can do this via large events but this approach also needs to be integrated into the day-to-day business of teaching and learning. There is some resistance to this approach.

- Colleagues benefit from talking to others because you never know what you are going to find out. Also such opportunities give you the chance to divorce yourself from your subject context and evaluate yourself as a teacher not a subject specialist. This allows you to reflect upon your own practice.

- Some teachers don't like to go outside the comfort zone of their subject specialism

- However there is a need to reflect upon one's own practice and to improve. Time is always the enemy: under time pressures there is a tendency to play safe. Staff need planning time.

- Planning time is hard to build into a working week. However you can create an ethos of self development in the team, for example by setting up staff development sessions and attending them yourself and by setting aside part of staff meetings. Staff loading stops this occurring on a casual, ad hoc basis, instead there has to be a specific project against which time can be allocated.

- Creating the ethos described previously is more democratic, less about experts, more about everyone having something to contribute. Staff themselves identify what they require and then provide it for themselves.

- Asking small teams (say at the module level) to come up something they thought was good practice is another way forward. These ideas are then presented to others for comment. This also helps to improve practice.
- Such an approach needs a lot of trust and support [as may be seen in a subject which has a strong identity, such as Law]
- This approach can also work in a larger group but all staff need to be on board. As such it is less likely because it is more difficult to define a set of clear ground rules.
- Colleagues tend to behave in ways that adhere to the expectations you create, so by promoting staff development and the sharing of good practice you set up [positive] expectations. Managers have to set up these expectations.

- Moving colleagues from seeing themselves as subject specialists to teachers is hard. It is done in small ways and needs to be done constantly. It has to be done by talking and discussing.

- The subject specialism is still central but being a teacher is also very important to the interviewee.

- The amount of work that someone does might affect how he or she views himself or herself. Even if someone is mainly engaged in teaching they concentrate on 1-2 subject areas but they have the

opportunity to think about teaching and learning more. (there may be differences between old and new universities on this).
- Many/most staff are still receptive to new ideas in teaching and learning and will come along to staff development events.

Does having a professional body (PSRB) have any effect on what has been discussed?

- Having a [Law] PSRB means regular inspection including classroom observation. This means there is always an impetus to make things as good as is possible. This might be out of fear or pride [or both?]
- A [Law] PSRB will look at both process of teaching and the product. The PSRB inspectors are looking at what is required and how that has been achieved. Being inspected regularly means there is an emphasis on the improvement of teaching and learning.
- The Law Society has now stopped making inspection visits and are now more outcomes focussed. They now look at results, the assessments and the external examiners' comments.
- This might have a detrimental effect as it is the loss of a "critical friend" who has no other agenda – as such it is a loss. In the old system the inspectors/assessors had a teaching and learning background as well as being lawyers in practice. This gave them a different perspective.

Ed. D Research Interviews
Interview no. 11
Date: 26th January 2009
Faculty: "C"
Role: e-learning coordinator

- It is possible to identify good practice in e-learning but it is not always easy.it is possible to view things "statically" – that is, look at the nature of the learning materials, the type of instructions given to students
- Face-to-face encounters are much harder to judge

The characteristics of good practice [in e-learning] would include:

- Care and concern for the student
- Wanting to help people learn
- Clear instructions to indicate what is required and how to gain help
- Educating students to help each other

Poor practice might include:

- Lots of material but no contact between tutor and student
- No willingness to help the student

- It is not possible [or advisable] to advocate any particular approach, as different cohorts will need different things at different times.
- Equally there will be a need for different technologies at different times. The teacher thus has to be flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of students.

- Tutors need to have a certain level of experience of the different technologies available and the strategies that can be used with these.
- This does not mean they have got to use any specific technology but they should at least be aware of what is available. This can be gained through workshops/events/on-line. Awareness is vital.
- Mentors help to spread good practice but networks offer informal support and social networking tools can also help keep the momentum going so that initial connections are maintained and staff can see what is possible – usually by seeing what others are doing.

- Subject specific needs are not paramount in e-learning: once a tutor understands what specific tools can do then they can adapt them to their own specific needs.

- The basic ideas of communication, reflection, gaining feedback and aiding collaboration are all useful for all subjects.
- Tutors should be able to see the generic benefits beneath the subject-specific. This is true of e-learning but is not exclusively the case: the ideas of care for students, interaction, active and social learning can all be transferred.
- E-learning champions do swap ideas and offer each other help and advice as required, in order to try not to keep reinventing the wheel.

- input at staff development sessions needs to tied to practical tasks and there needs to be some follow through afterwards.

- Those staff who have been involved in staff development sessions are more likely to try to improve the student learning experience. E-learning tools van help to make this more enjoyable.

- Sometimes not using e-learning might be best practice, e.g. if learning requires other [more specific] skills but most skills can be replicated and developed on-line to the advantage of both staff and students.
- E-learning should be available to help most students in most situations. It can, for instance, help face-to-face contact.

- From a university point of view it is necessary for staff to develop their e-learning skills if the targets set are to be met.
- There is a need to consider making courses [which update staff on the technologies available to them] compulsory. Most staff see the benefits of using e-learning but are often hindered by lack of time or fear.

- If there is little engagement with e-learning students with high expectations of the level of e-learning based on their own experience might get bored or think that there are other [better?] ways of achieving something.
- This might make staff rethink the ways in which they deliver sessions. They may think about breaking down learning into smaller, more varied bits.
- Involving students in their own learning means a different approach, a different way of planning. This may be more challenging but at the heart of this is 2-way communication rather than 1-way.
- Although it is possible to create high quality resources to enhance 1-way transmission this will not enable deep learning or allow staff to check the students' understanding.
- Highly polished resources are not necessary to facilitate learning but e-learning resources do need to be easy to use and shouldn't be confusing to the user; this requires time [expertise] and resources.

Ed. D Research Interviews
Interview no. 12
Date: 10th March 2009
Faculty: "C"
Role: Dean

- It is possible to identify good practice in learning and teaching in this subject discipline – Anatomy.
- Good practice might be described as something that causes a perceivable difference for the better in the learner: "a light is suddenly switched on!"
- Good practice can also be about refreshing/reviving a learning and teaching package. In this case it is about the energy put in by the practitioner that is received by the learner. Here learning often takes place when the learner reflects upon his or her own learning.
- The sharing of good practice can and does take place across cognate areas of the faculty, but the areas must be able to share approaches and outcomes.
- There is some sharing of good practice outside of specifically cognate groups where it concerns topics that different areas are interested in – e.g. inter-professional education. Here it is important for different types of student to benefit from the good practice identified. However this sharing across disciplines is not always possible as some disciplines have particular demands that mean it is not appropriate to take ideas from elsewhere.
- Having a professional body can make a difference to what can and is shared. There are some elements of practice which are like "recipe sheets" whereas there are some elements which are much more theoretical.
- Some techniques are generic across the whole of the HE sector and even wider (e.g. giving a lecture, running a discussion) but there are other elements that rest upon the experience of the lecturer as practitioner.
- Some students feel that they need to be taught by a specialist as they believe a specialist will know what is useful but in fact it should be the curriculum which shapes the delivery and therefore non-specialists/other specialists can deliver a subject, especially at say Level 1.
- Students however value what they get from a specialist and pick up ideas from someone who knows what they are talking about and how to communicate that successfully.
- Delivery is very important; it is about getting students thinking. Lectures are about triggering thoughts and so the techniques of delivery are crucial – no amount of knowledge with poor delivery is of any use; gaining students' interest is vital. If a lecturer can have both the knowledge and know how to deliver it that is even better!
- There is some cross-pollination of ideas across disciplines, usually on the back of inter-professional education. This is often driven by a shared sense of professional identity and sometimes because of PSRB requirements.

- There are also many examples across the faculty of projects where disparate groups of staff have got together to work and share ideas. This does not happen as often as might be imagined – there has to be a "real life" reason for cooperating. External initiatives/pressures such as government initiatives/policies might mean there is more sharing.
- Research and scholarship also occurs across professional/discipline boundaries. There are often multi-disciplinary teams in the real world and this is sometimes mirrored at DMU. An example of this is the response to the DDA4 and disability as a general theme; here research and cooperation is multi-disciplinary. As such it is likely to produce innovative ways of working by bringing together strengths from across the faculty.
- Barriers to cooperation include the individualism of academics. However the benefits outweigh the hurdles.
- As Dean BM regards the faculty as a whole entity for certain agendas and as a series of departments and pockets of excellence for other agenda. The faculty is diverse and there is a need for both a "top-down" and a "bottom-up" approach (to teaching and learning.)
- There will be some common approaches to teaching and learning, e.g. towards e-Learning where there are common techniques. However there are also some specialisms, so each may use different approaches to fit e-learning into their curriculum.
- Where there is common ground people will seek out practice that works and share/use it. They will also discuss ways of overcoming similar problems.
- Lack of time stops people sharing good practice more than they do. There are formal faculty fora for discovering good practice in learning and teaching (e.g. FLTC, Periodic Review) but there are few informal gatherings or physical spaces (e.g. a common room) where staff can talk and share. This is a shame because if such gatherings did exist then more innovative ideas might occur. Even at team meetings the talk is about the business of running a course. This is true across the whole HE sector: it is much busier that it used to be and there is thus not enough time to pause and to think.

Ed. D Research Interviews
Interview no. 13
Date: 16th March 2009
Faculty: "C"
Role: Health Studies Lecturer

- It is possible to identify good practice in the subject discipline of health Studies. This is based on anecdotal evidence from students; from observations of teaching as part of the PGCertHE and through peer observation of teaching. Good practice would thus include:
    - Having a dialogue with students rather than dictating to them;
    - Meaning emerging through dialogue rather than being known in advance
    - Involving students in the learning process
    - Meeting student expectations and giving them what they want/need
    - Practice that benefits students
    - Practice that works within the institutional and PSRB guidelines of content and approach.

- It now seems as though the market and a move towards vocationalism is dictating what is being taught.
- The student profile will also be a major factor in what is taught and how it is delivered: context is important.
- Good practice is about including as many students in the learning process as is possible. It is also about how to deliver most effectively to the students that are enrolled. There is thus not a "one size fits all" which can be used. This is true of content, delivery and assessment.
- From this it seems possible to identify poor practice in a particular context but that will always be a personal thing.
- Ensuring that context is paramount does not necessarily mean that standards are not safeguarded. Instead it is about acknowledging the different abilities, backgrounds and understandings of the students.
- Good practice is about giving students skills, confidence, self-esteem, empowering them/giving them permission to value their own experiences.

- This approach is shared by some fellow colleagues, but there is only anecdotal evidence to support this.
- There is a shared view of widening participation across the team and the need to innovate, to teach/assess new students in new ways.

- Formally organised events such as seminars and the PGCertHE are seen as ways of disseminating good practice. Events that encourage reflection on one's own practice are important ways of disseminating.
- Such events don't seem to happen at a faculty level, only at a team/subject level and when run by other groups (such as APDU).
- It may be that they do occur in other areas and that they are not well publicised.

- The PGCertHE is a good way of being introduced to new ideas and approaches from across the university.
- However in order to take advantage of these opportunities you need to be open-minded and reflective; willing to embrace different ideas from elsewhere and to use them when they fulfil a need/requirement.

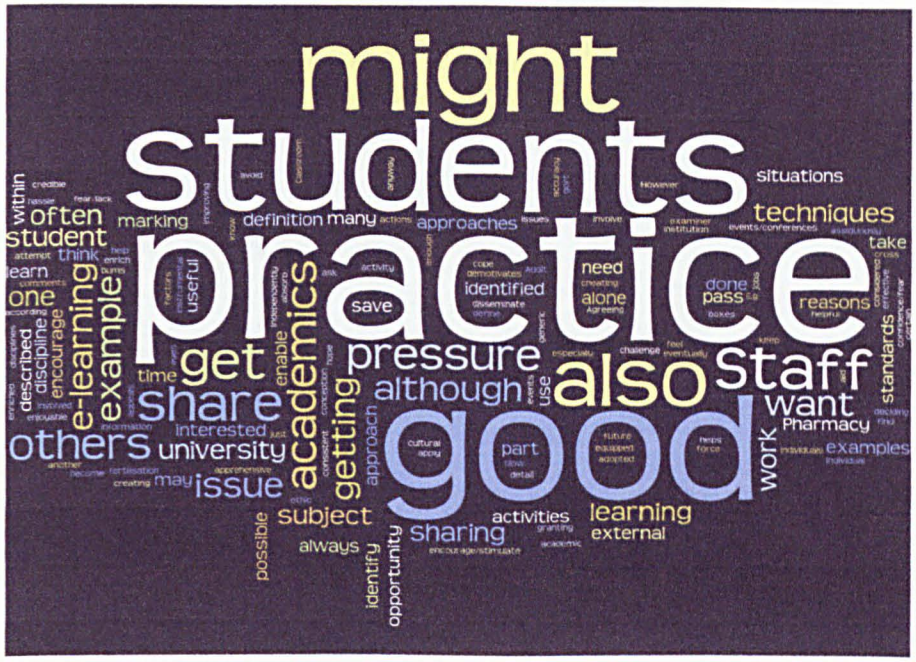
- This attitude towards teaching and learning – of putting the student experience at the centre - is borne out of own experiences: a mature student returning to learn. This means that there is an empathy with the students and an understanding of their needs. This is vital but it cannot be taught.

- Does this approach have any impact of student learning and achievement? It does make a great deal of difference to the student experience. It matters that teachers treat students as individuals, that they are put at the heart of the enterprise. This will have a positive effect upon student retention, achievement even recruitment.

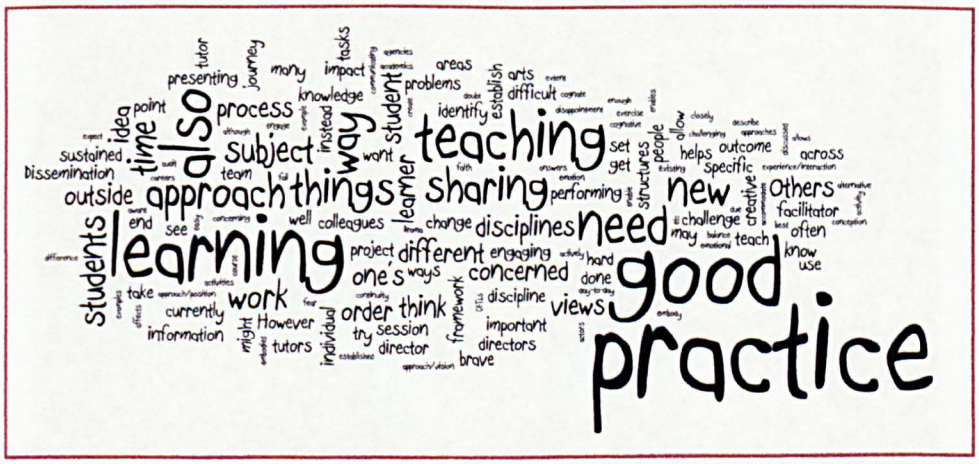
Appendix 5: "Wordclouds" of all interviews.

All “high frequency” words

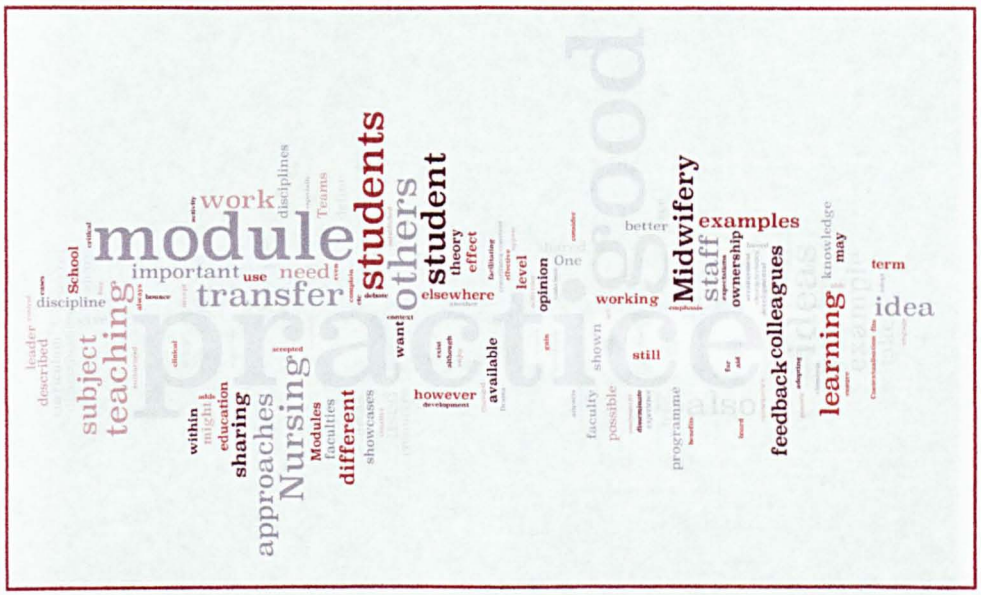
Wordcloud from Interview 1



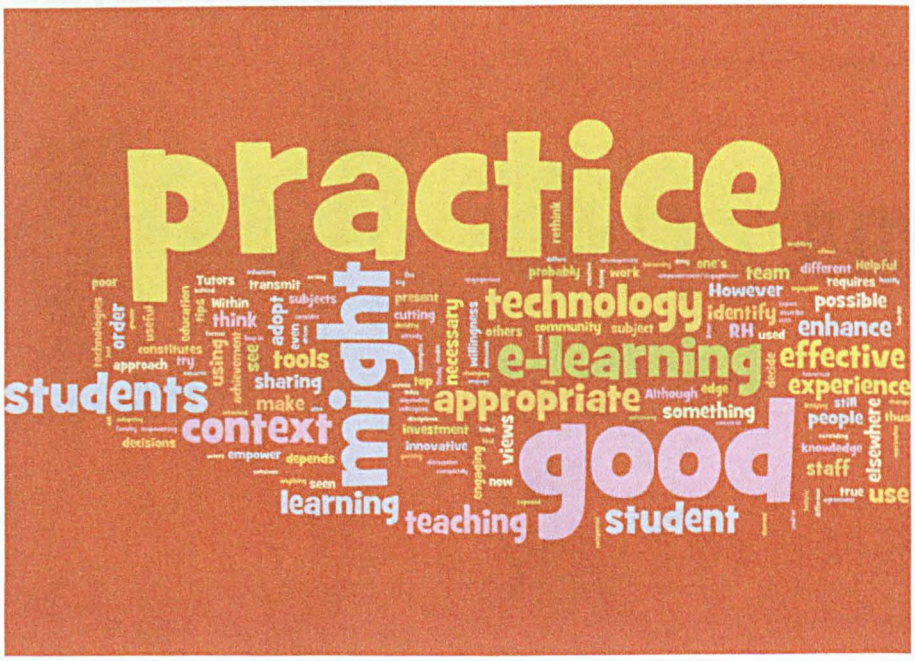
Wordcloud from Interview 2



Wordcloud from Interview 3

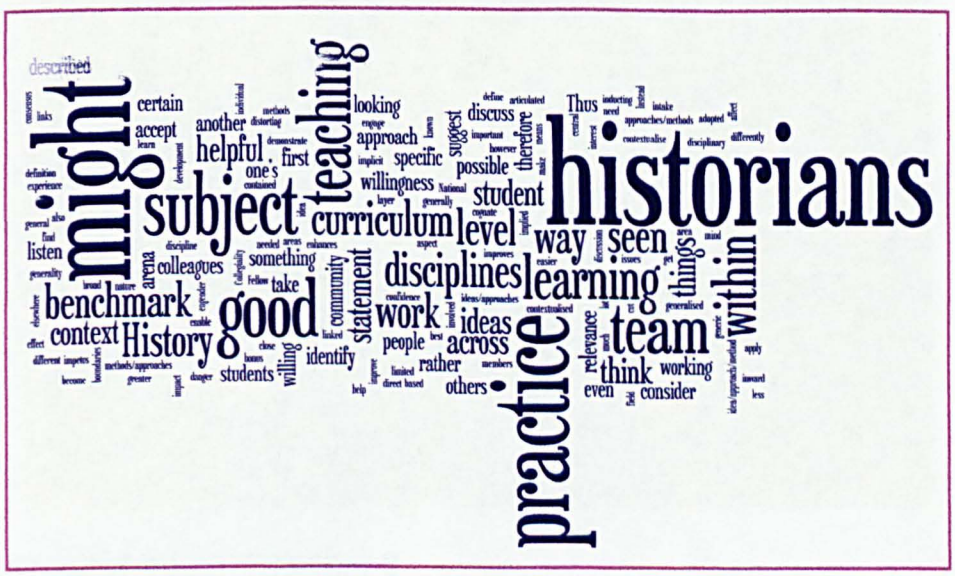


Wordcloud from Interview 4

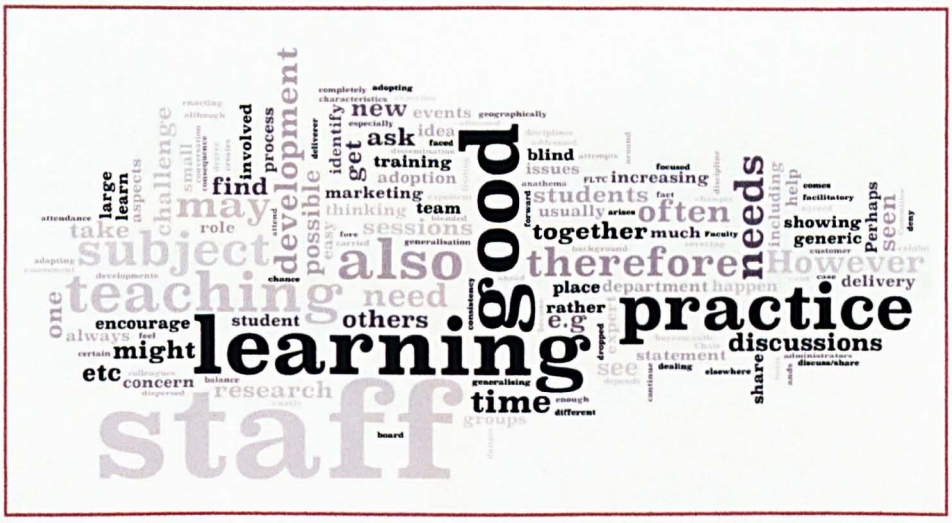


Wordcloud from Interview 5

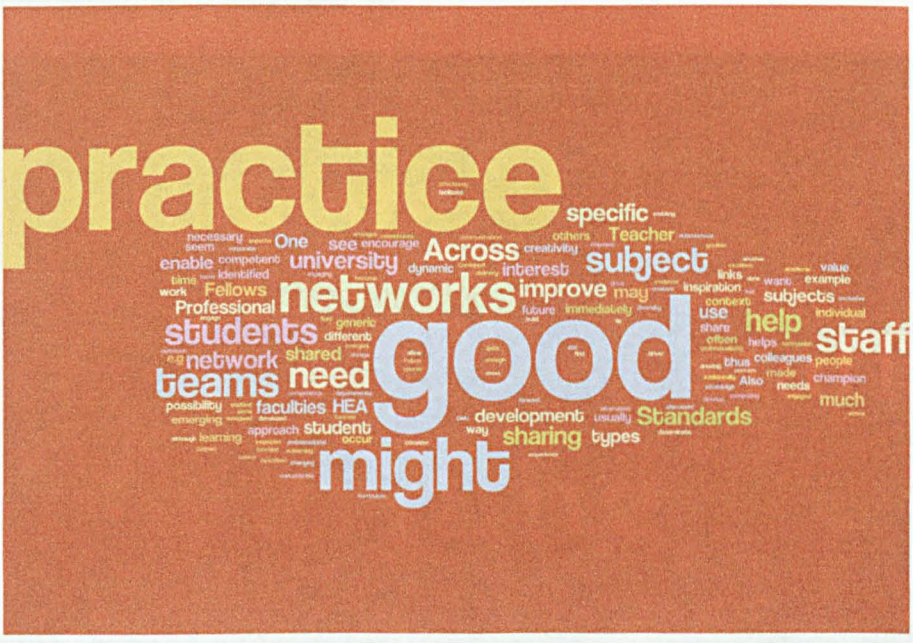
Wordcloud from Interview 6



Wordcloud from Interview 7

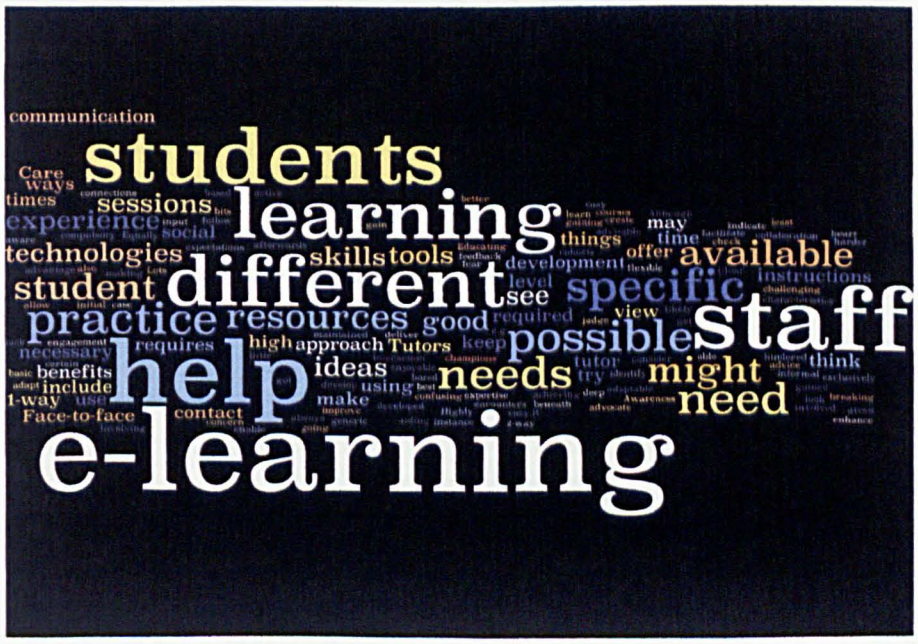


Wordcloud from Interview 8



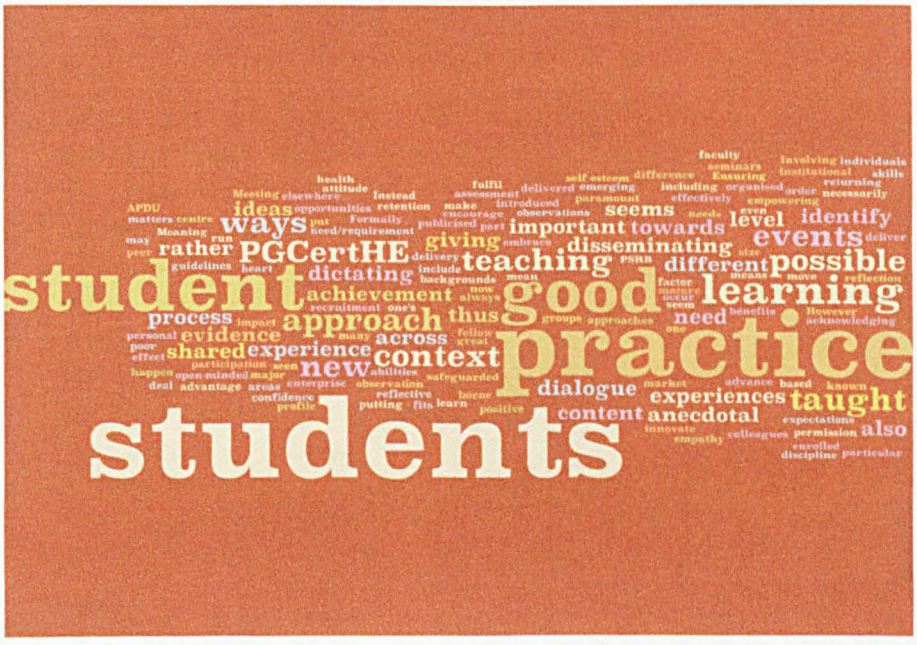
Wordcloud from Interview 9

Wordcloud from Interview 10



Wordcloud from Interview 11

Wordcloud from Interview 12



Wordcloud from Interview 13

Appendix 6: Transcript of interview 12

Ed. D Research Interviews
Interview no. 12
Date: 10th March 2009
Interviewee: BM
Faculty: Health & Life Sciences
Role: Dean

Interview Transcript.

Q	What I'm interested in then is thinking about the ideas of good practice in learning and teaching and, er, and about the ideas of sharing that, and its usefulness, if it has any use as well, 'cos that's one of the ideas I'm thinking about. So, if we take your subject area, how would we describe your subject, your academic discipline area?
I12	My own personal one?
Q	Yes
I12	Well that's anatomy
Q	Ok. And do you have any teaching of that now then?
I12	Very little, two hours per year
Q	Right, ok
I12	And that's embryology in fact, which is a sub-part of anatomy. In previous years here I've taught up to nine hours, but that was, if you like, pure anatomy, but that's the most I've ever done, I've never undertaken much teaching here... and that was a kind of change of direction for me when I left my previous post four and a half years ago.
Q	Right, so you've got a lot of experience in terms of, in general teaching, and you've also got a lot of experience in the management of provision, so I'm going to try and cover both of those areas here, if that's alright. So if we start with the teaching angle, in your own teaching and in your own subject discipline, would you say that it's possible to identify examples of good practice in learning and teaching?
I12	Yes...very definitely.
Q	And how would you characterise those then? What would you say they were?
I12	Er, I think that they're practices that cause a perceivable change in a student...for the good, if you like...It's where the light suddenly switches on, if you put it in a vernacular sense.
Q	Ok, and do you, are you aware that either yourself or other people that you've worked with have...could you think of times when those things have happened and you're aware of those things?
I12	Yeah, I think they can happen quite informally, just in the course of a conversation with a student, or they may happen as a consequence of a teaching package which has been refreshed, revised or created completely new, to achieve a particular objective, that's certainly happened; or it may be perhaps as a consequence of rethinking how to deliver a subject in a lecture...so in other words it usually results from some energy being put in by the practitioner and as a consequence that's better received by the learner...though it has to be said that quite often, or possibly always, the most exciting changes happen when the learner is reflecting on the subject and it suddenly all clicks into place,

	and that can happen anywhere, it doesn't have to happen in the lecture theatre or the lab or...it could be in the bath or in the supermarket, you know, its that sort of thing, and that's I think true for students as much as it is for academics actually...suddenly there's a dawning inspiration and, er, it all makes sense...but it takes a lot of effort and I think you have to struggle, if you like, with information, um, to make it work.
Q	Ok. So, if we accept then that it is possible within your area to, er, do that, um, I think we'd probably assume from that that it's also possible in other areas, say within the faculty...?
I12	Yeah, yeah
Q	...do you know of any...or do you think it's possible for different parts of the faculty to share and use each other's good practice?
I12	Well I think that must be true because there are obviously groupings of cognate disciplines, I mean in the social sciences or the lab sciences, or even the caring or therapy side of things: those areas must be able to share certain approaches, and indeed, outcomes. I think the more interesting and more challenging issues are where you can get sharing across those different groupings and yet they can be effective, and I suppose a good example of that perhaps is in inter-professional education, where you bring together a mixture of students from all kinds of different backgrounds to achieve certain objectives; perhaps understanding the nature of professional identity, or how group dynamics works, etc, but equally I think there are opportunities to, for groups, for multi-disciplinary groups to learn together, um, shared learning, um, but perhaps going back to your point, I think its equally possible to use certain techniques in delivering educational packages that can be applied in a range of different areas. That's not always possible, you have to recognise that there are some things that are uni-professional, you can't, um, share all techniques, some are specific to particular types of student, but it's possible...
Q	Urm, ok. So in your faculty there's a lot of, obviously a lot of professional work, that dominates really doesn't it? Does that make a difference do you think in terms of the ways that people perceive practice and what they do?
I12	When you say practice, do you mean...
Q	...I mean teaching and learning practice.
I12	Right, right...urm, well I think in a professional educational programme there are different elements that make up the whole: some of it is about training, its about, if you like, giving recipe sheets out – "this is what you do under these circumstances" – but some of it, quite rightly, is also theoretical, and its about, I dunno, explaining how the human body works is a good example, everybody needs to know a bit about that, even if actually you become, you know, a speech and language therapist, where clearly you need to know how to get people speaking, um, so there are different approaches to the different constituents that make up the whole, and I think both are important. Now whether that actually shapes the way things are delivered...on one level I don't suppose it does because actually you have to stand up in your classroom and deliver a lecture, and there are techniques you use: PowerPoint, overhead projector, or whatever you use, simple chalking

	on the board, or question and answer with your students or getting them to work in small groups, those things are kind of generic, erm I think across higher education, (if) not wider than that. On the other hand if you're going to do training, the training components, then clearly you need to simulate, perhaps a practice situation, and by that practice I mean a clinical situation, and there it's a quite different sort of...its almost role playing, but its using professional equipment and professional investigative techniques, and that is perhaps more relying on the experience of the lecturer as a practitioner, and that's quite different from the academic, theoretical kind of model, but I think both happen in this faculty...both are equally valid and valuable to the student...and there are some shared elements, but equally again...bits that characterise...(inaudible)
Q	So, if you were a... I don't know, this is going to show my ignorance now, but if you were working as a nurse up at Charles Freer, or a nurse educator up at Charles Freer, you would...do you think you would want to be taught...you would feel more secure if you were being taught solely by nurse educators, even if it was an academic aspect of things?
I12	Well, that's interesting because, perhaps not necessarily that example, but certainly from my own past, because I'm a scientist, teaching anatomy to medical students, which is what I did for 25 years, they didn't actually...the students didn't realise I wasn't a medical doctor, they thought I was just a medical doctor, then I said "oh no I'm not actually, I'm a Ph.D." "oh" and some types, some of them...there was a thought, I think, that they'd be better off taught by a medic, and to some extent you can see why because they're aiming for that goal and actually what they want to know is "what of this subject is going to be useful to me...when I'm practising as a doctor?" and if you've never practised as a doctor how can you know what's going to be useful? But in reality of course if you spend enough time studying the discipline and talking to various people you pick up what's useful and what's helpful and what's appropriate, and the curriculum shapes what that should be anyway...so, I don't think it matters that much at the early level, um, so I suppose...that is the same for nurse education. Some of the students feel more secure because they believe you know what you're talking about and why you're doing it...I don't think that's true, I think other people can work that out...at certain levels, I mean, clearly if you're teaching at, if you like, a level which is very near to qualification or registration, its probably more difficult, but at first year, level 1 sort of stage, its not a problem at all...but that's my perspective and I think, having said that, I still think some of the students might...on the other hand, and another important factor, I think the students, as a whole, tend to value what they get, and I think students pick very, very quickly if they've got someone who knows what they're talking about and can communicate it in a way that makes sense to them, and they'll value that as much perhaps as having someone who's a medical doctor, who can't deliver – and there's been plenty of examples of that – it doesn't sit comfortably necessarily just because you happen to be in my field or a medical doctor, you may not be able to deliver, but a scientist who can deliver is far more valuable, and acknowledged to be so, in my

	experience...
Q	So the act of delivery, that act of teaching and learning practice...are you saying that at certain levels that's as important as being a subject specialist?
I12	I think the delivery is terribly important and you can engage with the students and get the students switched on and not necessarily know very much particularly in the early stages of your career. if you can get them switched on actually all you're trying to do is to get them thinking and in any case in a lecture you don't necessarily use it as a vehicle to transmit all knowledge you simply do it to trigger thoughts creating space for them to go on and do it by your self after the lecture, so you don't need to know a lot necessarily but it helps if you do of course but you don't have to what is very important is switching them on. Techniques of delivery are in my view are sort of crucial. If you haven't got those no amount of knowledge will ever be of any use to anybody because they'll just sit there staring blankly in front of themselves not taking anything in and I've spoken to students who say that the most boring people in the world knew a lot but they were boring and I didn't listen, equally there are others who may or may not have known a lot I don't know but certainly they were very interesting people and as soon as they started speaking I thought wow this is interesting and of course it all went from there... if you can do both of course that's even better.
Q	So in that case then but does that mean then and again I'm using your faculty as an example does that mean then that within these faculty you would have pharmacists working with Nurse educators and nurse educators working with social workers, that sort of thing? Cross polenization, does that happen than?
I12	Probably not as much as you might expect in reality I mean it happens in Intel professional education to some extent but that's more about the student experience done the Staff's experience. then also the shared teaching sessions I think but then not many, and I think this is partly because of the professional identity off different populations the professional bodies have defended their programs, prescribes the numbers of hours and all that should be taught ... and of course there isn't much spare ... I think there is anything from doing that and there are lots of examples different projects maybe not necessarily about teaching and learning maybe about research and scholarship where disparate groups of staff do come together... and that's very encouraging and helpful. So it does happen and there are spinoffs from that to, but I don't think it happens as much as some people would like.
Q	And that is presumably quite hard to do...?
I12	Yes. You've got to have a reason to doing it and sometimes that's difficult to conceive ... why would a social worker and a pharmacist want to work together? Particularly in relation to education I suppose you could argue it might be useful for pharmacists to understand the context within which they might be operating in ...a shop in a council estate in inner Leicester or something might be quite interesting...
Q	But in that example it would have to be a real live reason to cooperate it wouldn't be just for the hell of it
I12	And that's always what dictates the success of these things your reason

	for doing it.
Q	That suggests also then that the real-world is dictating the corporation, so if we had a government agenda that suddenly brought to agencies together who wouldn't normally then that would be mirrored within the academic sector, would that be reasonable?
I12	Yes
Q	Within the faculty you talked about research and scholarship in a moment ago and there is obviously a lots of research and scholarship that happens within this faculty, is that again very much within professional boundaries...?
I12	I think a lot of it will be within the professional boundaries: pharmacists do pharmacy nurses do nursing, but equally there are multidisciplinary teams, so if you look at the wider world multidisciplinary teams are able to tackle problems in an innovative way all from a variety of angles, those are often fundable and successful, and so we mirror that internally as well, and we've certainly got the range of expertise to do that. I think that there are examples of groups getting together: interestingly today is the inaugural meeting of the disability group which has been convened by ... and that's a multidisciplinary team approach...
Q	To disability?
I12	Yes, and as a research community we've been discussing in the last year or so to try and encourage a bit more this kind of thing because as I said that is likely to produce innovative lines of enquiry, but also it brings together the expertise and other strengths which otherwise would not manifest themselves, and that's pretty important for acquiring funding, so that's there are very good reasons for doing it. The difficulties and barriers to doing it are academic individualism, academics like to follow their own path... so that not everybody will want to participate in that kind of thematic approach. Where we can get people to do it we should try and we've been seeing a lot of potential benefits for it , and that would be true of the university as a whole I would have thought, not just HLS.
Q	So the potential benefits might be in terms of funding presumably, they wouldn't be in terms of student numbers?
I12	If we're still talking about research the only other benefits would be if you produced a journal paper describing some rather unusual or innovative results that no one else would have done, then of course you win immediately because people get to know about it...
Q	And so that might bring certain spin-offs then?
I12	Yes
Q	Okay so that's in the research area then, I suppose the other thing to think about them is at a strategic level at your level, if it's the view that what you need to do is.... to create pools of expertise in a professional area as opposed to considering the faculty as a whole? How do you view that? How do you view HLS, as one big thing or do you view it as a series of units -- however they're described -- that are all excellent?
I12	I suppose that depends on who's asking the question really. Clearly we do regard it as a whole entity when we come to the budgets and suchlike or indeed when we're looking at overall indicators of research

	and similar, we tend to get asked what does the faculty think, the way the organisation works it tends to break itself down into smaller chunks to work. Equally of course you can break it down within the faculty, and that must be right because we are all different and it's a very diverse faculty as you know, it's a very large faculty and is very diverse, which distinguishes it from every other faculty. So it is like in some ways four small faculties in one and indeed this faculty is as large as some very small universities and the schools are as large as some small faculties in some universities, and so it's a bit of a strange beast in that sense, which makes it interesting to be in my position because I get to see quite an interesting diversity and a range of challenges of various sorts is. So my answer to your question is really "both"... there's a kind of top-down and bottom-up approach and you need both. You have to encourage sometimes individuals... and later on I might be talking to someone about faculty wide issues, and you take a different approach, it's horses for courses.
Q	So that might mean then on the one hand then you might get some commonality to all teaching and learning, so for example e-learning, you might have a common approach across the whole faculty, but on the other hand you might have completely different approaches in different schools or areas depending on different things so both things are happening?
I12	e-learning is a good example actually. When you start to consider it as a whole there are certain things that you need to do, certain facilities that you need, certain ways of operating that are common to everybody. A basic understanding of how blackboard might work, or a basic understanding of all kinds of advantages there are in multimedia presentations for the students. On the other hand each area of the schools need encouragement to knit it into their into curriculum, they're all different, different contexts, and come up with different ways. e-learning is a range of tools and to some areas there are particular tools that are more useful than others and I guess that does depend on the specific area but overall when you consider the resource implications of it there's the staffing requirements...
Q	Okay so my final question would be about the effort that this all takes, and by this I mean if you are thinking about trying to find out what other people are doing, trying to get other ideas from other people, on the one hand you could argue well that's really efficient because if I can talk to so-and-so was really good at something I don't have to reinvent the wheel and that sounds really efficient on the one hand, but on the other hand what I've found actually is that it's really quite an effort to go find that out from other people, partly because you don't know what other people are doing, so what would your approach be to that amount of effort that individuals have got to put in? And if you still think of yourself as a teacher as well, do you think is more likely that members of your faculty are going to be bothered to try and communicate with others?
I12	It probably is true that when you get down to things like e-learning, those are things that people think yes that would be interesting and I need to put more into my module and so therefore they'll talk to anybody they think knows anything about it, so the e-learning

	champions for example are people who talk certainly across divisions in their school and also to each other and start to spread good practice and that's a good example of that kind of thing. Equally as a teacher myself I came across ...a journal article about a novel way to teach the anatomy of the heart and I'd never seen this before and I found this very exciting but I probably won't ever teach the anatomy of the heart over again but I remember when I did I thought that's very good and so I sent that to a whole load of my ex-colleagues thinking that they might be interested in this and they said thanks very much, and so people do that. They come across something good and they'll share it. The extent to which they'll share across disparate parts of the faculty depends on the nature of the advantage shall we say, I mean if it's something very curricular specific like my heart thing then there's no point in sharing that with a social worker, and on the other hand it is something about e-learning and you realise that you can upload this on blackboard if you do this and in your context that would be really useful then you'd say yes thank you very much, so they do it. And other things like the involvement in public patients fora that is something that goes across the faculty and the sharing of practice there: "how do you bring in service users to inform curriculum design or are involved in presentations etc" these kind of things are shared because their common problems but when it comes to specific bits of knowledge that is less likely but techniques and approaches, and I suppose you could argue that things like how to Deal with IT or health and safety or communication skills all these are common to many of our professions although in different contexts and so the basic things about how you talk to other people and make sure that it's effective -- and certain things to avoid saying to other people -- those kind of things could be shared if you've got a good angle on it... as a comment on the faculty I think people are willing to do that but what stops the lot of them is time, I think it's so bound up that it is not in their own particular area, because of the nature of the work they don't get an opportunity to do that. We don't I suppose have enough fora for doing that. There are formal means of communicating I suppose: there's your role in DA Q I suppose, there's what we do to reflect and in the institution in all kinds of ways -- University learning and teaching committee, periodic reviews etc etc. there are all kinds of ways when people do stop and take breath if you like. But informally I don't think the university is very good at gathering together its troops to talk and I think that's a shame because if we did have more of that kind of thing all sorts of novel ideas would pop up and interesting partnerships would arise which we wouldn't have had otherwise – we all rather much in our little boxes and its my challenge to do something about it I suppose, but its not actually very easy in a building where there's no room to meet so we have people shuffling corridors and coffee rooms...in some institutions where they do have such venues cross-fertilisation does work quite well...
Q	Like Junior Common Rooms and stuff? In the old institutions...
I12	Yeah, I think that they've got that and to some extent that would help, and just to give people time in their busy schedules, even in course teams to meet up, but they're usually so busy teaching or marking that

	there isn't the opportunity to get everybody together... that's a good opportunity...course team meetings and so on.
Q	So even at course team meetings its the business that...
I12	I think it probably is...people don't have enough time to sit back and gaze...well, it's very busy, it's very hectic. It's not just DMU its true of the whole sector, old and new, and I think that the old has caught up with the new in that sense, its much busier now than when I went into it thirty years ago, and I think that's a good thing to be honest, but I think we're far too busy chasing our tails rather than pausing and thinking...
Q	Ok thank you very much
I12	You're welcome

Total interview time: 30:20 mins

Appendix 7 : breakdown of interview categories

Themes emerging from interviews

code	section (re-coding)	theme description	total in agreement	
		is it possible to identify good practice in your subject area?	13	
		Definitions of good practice		
	1. Student focussed			
c	1.1	depends upon student mix (context)	8	student
nn	1.2	relationship between tutor and learner	2	student
xx	1.3	facilitating understanding	4	student
	2. engaging the student			
LLL	2.1	enhancing the student (learning) experience	5	student
a	2.2	supporting individual students	5	student
qq	2.3	enabling students to grow	5	student
ww	2.4	tapping in to student experience	3	student
mmmm	2.5	need to be aware of students' previous ways of learning	2	student
rrr	2.6	active learning - "making students want to do things"	3	student
b	2.7	igniting a passion	1	student
dd	2.8	challenging students	4	student
cc	2.9	maximising student potential	2	student
gg	2.10	not just about getting students to pass	1	student
jjjj	2.11	positive (formal and informal) student feedback	1	student
	3. Subject expertise			
ooo	3.1	depends on subject context	3	subject
e	3.2	staff need to be subject specialists	5	subject
eeee	3.3	being up-to-date (in own subject specialism)	2	subject

vv	3.4	integrating theory with practice	1	subject
yyy	3.5	ways of working in line with (QAA) benchmark statement	1	subject
f	3.6	subject specialism is reducing in importance	2	subject
	4. general/other			
d	4.1	depends on link to employability	1	student
g	4.2	need to split good practice into categories	1	?
kkk	4.3	appropriate and effective practice	3	student
		Definitions of poor practice		
	5. Pedagogy			
nnn	5.1	transmitting knowledge rather than enabling and engaging	1	subject
LLLL	5.2	getting caught up in a specific way of thinking/acting	1	subject
tttt	5.3	no willingness to help students	1	subject
	6. Resources			
mmm	6.1	using technology (or other resources) as a life jacket	2	subject
nnnn	6.2	innovation for its own sake	2	subject
h	6.3	teachers don't make use of ready made resources (existing examples of GP)	1	not student
		Ways of discovering good practice		
	7. Informal (mainly internal)			
l	7.1	peer observation	3	staff
j	7.2	left to team	3	staff
ss	7.3	team teaching	3	staff
	8. Formal (involving externals)			
ttt	8.1	moderation of exams (or other assessments)	1	staff
kkkk	8.2	external examiner reports etc	1	staff
	9. Other			
uu	9.1	over sustained period, not one-off	1	?
		How to share good practice?		
	10. Informally			
rrrr	10.1	develop atmosphere of trust and mutual support	1	staff
yy	10.2	staff "encourged to engage"	1	staff
bbbb	10.3	informal discussions amongst team	3	staff
	11. Formally arranged events			

k	11.1	at specific staff development events	8	staff
cccc	11.2	staff development sessions need to be directly relevent to need	3	staff
jj	11.3	present ideas "neutrally' and hope others think it useful	2	staff
oooo	11.4	at staff meetings (standing item on agenda)	1	staff
zzz	11.5	through review of curriculum	2	staff
	12. Networks			
hhhh	12.1	development of networks	1	staff
www	12.2	teachers fellows (and NTFs)	3	staff
uuu	12.3	pedagogic interest group	2	subject
bbb	12.4	academic mentors act as critical friends and share GP	2	subject
	13. Other			
aaaa	13.1	staff more willing to take practice from others in same discipline	2	subject
uuuu	13.2	PGCertHE	1	staff
		why identify good practice?		
	14. Student focus			
o	14.1	to improve student achievement	1	student
p	14.2	to improve student experience	2	student
	15. Staff focus			
n	15.1	to change staff practice	2	staff
q	15.2	to improve marking and feedback	1	student
r	15.3	so staff become more than subject specialists	2	subject
m	15.4	to share practice outside of subject area	1	subject
L	15.5	reduce staff workload	2	staff
		can good practice be shared across subjects?		
s	16.1	generic skills can be shared	6	staff
t	16.2	if staff are willing to learn from other areas	2	staff
u	16.3	not all staff are willing to learn from others	1	staff
ii	16.4	only in some subject areas	1	subject
pp	16.5	often needs specialist space	1	subject
rr	16.6	requires trust	1	staff
sss	16.7	can't mindlessly transfer good practice	1	subject
xxx	16.8	context is vital - subject, faculty etc	5	subject
vvv	16.9	further staff have to travel (mentally, physically, symbolically) less	3	staff

		liklihood that sharing will occur			
dddd	16.10	adoption of GP the hardest stage	1	staff	
ffff	16.11	sharing of GP doesn't happen as a matter of course	1	staff	
zz	16.12	some transfer of GP across modules esp re resources and approaches	2	staff	subject
aaa	16.13	some transfer of GP across different professions	2	staff	subject
ssss	16.14	having a PSRB can encourage sharing of GP	2	subject	
		why learn from others?			
	17. Personal/internal				
qqq	17.1	to rethink practice	3	staff	subject
gggg	17.2	to improve practice	3	staff	subject
v	17.3	so own skills don't diminish	3	staff	
	18. External				
x	18.1	to keep up-to-date with legislation	2	staff	
mm	18.2	to assuage external (QAA) requirements	3	staff	
	19. Professional				
w	19.1	to meet changing student expectations	2	student	
LL	19.2	to get the job done, increse efficiency (instrumental approach)	2	staff	
y	19.3	to escape own subject-specific paradigm	2	subject	
z	19.4	to change the conception of professionalism in HE	2	subject	staff
		effect of sharing good practice?			
ccc	20.1	students more engaged	3	student	
hhh	20.2	achievement is improved	3	student	
iii	20.3	student expectations raised	1	student	
jjj	20.4	students feel part of process of module	1	student	
		other comments			
	21. The nature of being an academic				
aa	21.1	staff work alone not across disciplines, doesn't encourage cross fertilisation	8	staff	
bb	21.2	staff need to see the benefit of working with others/across disciplines	6	staff	
eee	21.3	staff are receptive to other ideas	3	staff	
ee	21.4	need specific time to meet to share	7	staff	
ddd	21.5	need specific resources in order to share GP	2	staff	
kk	21.6	most academics don't like to "blow their own trumpet"	1	staff	

	22. Management issues				
ff	22.1	pressure to fill places not safeguard standards	1	student	
hh	22.2	pressure to get students through not ask them to think	1	student	
ppp	22.3	management need to support sharing of GP	3	?	
pppp	22.4	need to stop staff existing in a vacuum (of own subject)	1	staff	subject
qqqq	22.5	need to create ethos of staff development and of sharing	1	staff	
	23. Other				
fff	23.1	new ideas shouldn't imply existing practice is poor	1	staff	
oo	23.2	tutor and learner need to see themselves as embarking on a joint act of learning/discovery	2	staff	student
tt	23.3	helps recognise individuals and help career prospects	1	staff	
ggg	23.4	students say they like their tutors sharing GP	1	student	staff
iiii	23.5	visions of the future	1	staff	