



# **Educational Development in the United Kingdom**

**Report for the  
Heads of Educational Development Group  
(HEDG)**

**David Gosling**

**February 2008**

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## **Executive Summary**

**David Gosling**

### **Function of educational development units**

Educational development is now well-established in UK higher education institutions. The responsibility for advancing educational development goals is normally placed with a unit (Educational Development Unit (EDU)), which goes under a variety of titles, such as the Centre for Teaching and Learning, or Academic Practice, or Quality Enhancement. In a minority of institutions the educational development function is distributed among individuals with a teaching and learning responsibility.

There is broad agreement that the role of EDUs has two major strands: (1) the professional development of staff relating to learning and teaching and other academic duties, and (2) a shared strategic responsibility for implementation of the learning, teaching and assessment strategy, encouragement of innovation, and enhancing teaching quality. Some units have a significant e-learning responsibility. The promotion of scholarship of teaching and learning and fostering links between teaching and research are now well-established as priority roles for EDUs. 72.5% of EDUs now see undertaking or contributing to pedagogic research as part of their function and 67.5% see their role as sponsoring research into teaching and learning. Most, but not all, units are responsible for the accredited initial professional development course, participation in which is now normally a requirement for new teaching staff.

### **Strategic importance**

About half of EDUs are within a central service such as registry, human resources or library and information services, and 40% are stand-alone units. 10% are within an academic Faculty. The Head of EDU normally reports directly to the senior manager (Pro Vice Chancellor (PVC) or Vice Principal (VP)) responsible for academic affairs. This suggests that EDUs are seen as having strategic importance to the institution, rather than simply a staff development function. EDUs have been responsible for drafting and implementing (often in collaboration with others) a wide range of institutional policies and strategies, including the Learning and Teaching Strategy. In some institutions, particularly in ancient and research intensive universities, EDUs do not have any significant role in developing strategies.

### **Staffing in EDUs**

The overall average number of staff employed in EDUs is 10.3 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs). In the post-1992 universities the average size is 13.1 FTEs and 8.7 in pre-1992 universities. The range of staff roles continues to be wide, reflecting the different remits of EDUs. Functions that may be included in some units but not others are e-learning support, student learning development (including postgraduates), pedagogical research, quality assurance and enhancement. There is a significant division between EDUs, and within EDUs, separating those who are conceived as having a purely 'service' role and those who have an 'academic' role that includes research activity.

### **Distributed educational development**

There is now a more conscious effort to implement various forms of a 'distributed model' of educational development. About half of the respondents referred to staff who have a

Faculty or departmental learning and teaching role, sometimes referred to as Teaching Fellows, Advisers, or Coordinators. The extent of the responsibilities allocated to these distributed posts varies considerably. The intention is to embed the educational development function within teaching departments. In addition, there are increasing numbers of staff associated with Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs), Higher Education Academy (HEA) Subject Centres, National Teaching Fellowships, and Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) projects who contribute to educational development, but are not necessarily answerable to the EDU.

### **Threat of re-organisation**

EDUs continue to be reorganised or restructured at regular intervals. The rate at which EDUs are being formed or reformed has not lessened to any extent. Restructuring is normally concerned with aggregating or disaggregating functions such as e-learning, student support, general staff development and quality assurance functions. The continuing threat of reorganisation tends to create a sense of marginalisation and demoralisation among EDU staff. Reorganisation is often associated with a change of the senior manager (PVC or VP) responsible for the EDU.

### **Funding**

The Teaching Quality and Enhancement Fund (TQEF) funding continues to be important (in England), but the trend seems to be towards EDUs becoming 'embedded' in core funding. Indicative of this trend is that 37% reported that 80-100% of their funding came from core funding and a further 12% received 60-80% from this source. However, TQEF remains important as the funding source for many of EDUs' projects. At the other end of the spectrum, 12% of the sample were reliant on TQEF for 80-100% of their funding and were clearly vulnerable to changes in Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) policy relating to TQEF.

### **National and institutional environment for educational development**

The overall finding is that most heads of EDUs are cautiously optimistic that the climate is more favourable to educational development activities now than five years ago. Similarly, the institutional environment was also viewed as being more favourable than five years ago by the majority.

The impact of major funding council initiatives was considered to be variable. TQEF was clearly rated as most significant – 18 out of the 35 English EDUs rated it as 'essential' and a further 13 as very important. Other funded initiatives had a more mixed reception, though most recognised that as far as CETLs were concerned, it was 'too early to tell'. Most heads of EDUs were somewhat disappointed with the impact of the HEA.

Educational development units are often required to respond to a wide range of external pressures relating to, for example, student feedback (National Student Survey (NSS)), employability, e-learning, widening participation, and quality audits. Applying for competitive funding such as the CETL initiative and supporting applications to national awards (National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS)) can occupy significant staff time.

### **Educational development as a contested role**

The dominance of the research culture in many universities means that EDUs' role in promoting teaching is perceived to put them in opposition to powerful interests within

their institution. EDUs are adopting a variety of strategies to ameliorate the teaching/research dichotomy.

External pressures, and institutional imperatives deriving from them, are sometimes in tension with the EDU's own conception of its role. There is sometimes a tension between the managerial functions required of EDU staff and their own allegiances to academic values.

Educational development is an accepted part of most UK higher education institutions, and its central purposes are now well established. But the expectations placed on EDUs vary considerably depending on the institutional context and the view of senior managers of their role. The resourcing available for EDUs is also widely variable, reflecting the management's perception of the significance of educational development to the institution.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Aims and purposes

The principal aim of this study is to provide a snapshot of educational development in the United Kingdom in 2007. The report is written for Heads of Educational Development, but it is hoped that the report will have a wider interest among managers of higher education institutions (HEIs), educational developers, and policy makers.

For Heads of Educational Development Units (EDUs) the report provides benchmark data which enable comparisons to be made between their EDU and other centres with a similar function. Such comparisons can be beneficial in stimulating debate about the size and function of EDUs and the issues they face. Secondly, it provides evidence of what EDUs are doing for anyone who does not understand what Educational Development (ED) is and is curious about this relatively new phenomenon in the higher education landscape. Thirdly, it is hoped that it will provoke discussion among the whole educational development community about the issues faced by EDUs – issues about their relationship with senior managers, with teaching staff and with students. It is with this audience in mind that I have included a final section on the ‘characteristics of successful educational development’. To some extent, this section reflects my own views and goes beyond the data collected, though I believe that the claims about ‘what works’ can be well supported from the literature on educational development.

The research reported here was undertaken in phases between February 2006 and September 2007. The report seeks to provide an account of the current state of Educational Development Units (EDUs) in the UK. The data on EDUs are based on a survey of 43 institutions (3 colleges, 22 post-1992 universities, and 18 pre-1992 universities), conducted in 2006. Further data were gathered through structured interviews, discussion at HEDG meetings and a second short survey in September 2007.

This report is being published at an interesting time for educational development in the UK. Unprecedented sums have been allocated to support the development of teaching and learning in higher education over the last eight years in England and Northern Ireland through the TQEF, and then, through the CETLs, which has the largest funding of any initiative to develop teaching in the UK. In Scotland, the shift to enhancement-led reviews is also placing educational development central stage. Following the recommendation of the Dearing Report (Dearing 1997), every institution in the UK has been required to have in place some form of professional development for all new teaching staff. These programmes are being accredited by the Higher Education Academy, formed in 2004, to provide a national centre to ‘help institutions, discipline groups and all staff to provide the best possible learning experience for their students’. In Section Five of this report the influence of these national initiatives will be discussed.

In the UK today, educational development has become a regular feature of higher education institutions, it has been allocated funding and staffing, it has a developing research base and a growing literature, and some influence in the funding councils. Nevertheless, the function and purposes of educational development, its methods and its institutional role and location remain debatable and provision varies widely between institutions. Similar issues exist in other national contexts – the USA (Sorcinelli et al.



2006), Canada (Wilcox 1998), Australia (Fraser 2001), Sweden and Norway (Martensson and Roxa 2005). This study is intended to contribute to this debate.

## **1.2 Background to the research**

HEDG was founded in 1995. At the first meeting we each told our story about our 'unit' and we discovered that the vast majority of us were newly appointed to fledgling centres. We were all intrigued to learn as much as we could about what other EDUs were doing. Its co-founders [1] therefore proposed that we should undertake a survey of the participating educational development units (EDUs). The survey sought to investigate the aims and role of EDUs, their size, functions and place within institutional structures. The paper was subsequently published in the first issue of the *International Journal for Academic Development* (Gosling 1996). The survey was repeated in 2000, this time with a sample of 50 institutions. A study, based on this second survey, described the changes to the educational development landscape in the UK since 1995 (Gosling 2001).

In 2005 HEDG commissioned a new survey in order to create a longitudinal analysis of the growth and development of EDUs over a ten-year period. The first draft of this survey was discussed at a HEDG meeting in November 2006. Since then, further interviews have been conducted and further text prepared, which discuss the implications of the data that were collected.

## **1.3 Methodology and sample**

The survey tool first used in 1995 asked questions about the history of the unit, its position in the institution, staffing, remit, and policies for which the unit had responsibility for developing, and about the promotion of innovations in teaching. The survey was sent to 50 institutions and elicited 23 responses – i.e. 46% response rate (6 pre-1992 universities, 16 ex-Polytechnics and 1 College of Higher Education). The response included 3 from Scotland, 1 from Wales and 1 from Northern Ireland.

The questionnaire was sent again in September 2000, including the same questions, with additional questions about committee membership, research into teaching and learning, staff development programme, and evaluation. Fifty-three institutions responded (a 63% response rate).

The 2006 survey was designed to maintain continuity with the 1995 and 2000 surveys, but it also contained some new elements, notably some questions about staff outside of the EDU who have an educational development role. There were also new questions about the respondents' perception of the national and institutional environment. The survey instrument was piloted with five institutions in December 2005 and revised in line with suggestions made.

Respondents were invited to complete the revised survey via the HEDG JISCmail Listserv in February 2006. Responses were received from 43 institutions (3 Colleges, 22 post-1992 universities, and 18 pre-1992 universities). Two respondents were from Wales, 6 from Scotland, and 35 from England. The survey was supplemented by nine telephone and three face-to-face interviews that were recorded and transcribed. A

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<sup>1</sup> The co-founders of HEDG were Priscilla Chadwick (South Bank), David Baume (London Guildhall) and the author, David Gosling (East London).

further short online survey on provision for postgraduate students received 26 responses in September 2007.

The implications of a self-selected sample on the data are unknown. One might speculate that there was less likely to be a response where educational development was weak, but in practice the respondents included some where the provision was very limited. Although all respondents considered themselves to be a 'head of educational development' within their institution, four respondents were from institutions where there was no ED 'unit' in the sense of a separately identified organisational group of staff. Institutions without any designated 'educational developer' are not covered by this survey, so it is not possible to compare approaches to enhancing quality of teaching where there is no recognised educational development function.

The report also draws on an analysis of the combined responses to all three surveys. In this combined sample of 75 HEIs, 42 EDUs have responded to one survey, 27 to two of the surveys and 6 have responded to all three [2]. However, it is necessary to be cautious about aggregating data from all three surveys because of the rapid changes that have occurred over the last ten years. It is not possible, for example, to add the responses from an institution present in the 2000 survey but absent from the 2006 survey, since no assumptions can be made that the data gathered seven years ago still pertain today. Indeed, even data gathered a year ago will not accurately capture the situation as it is now, such is the pace of change in this field. However, some longitudinal comparisons have been made in order to reach some cautious conclusions about trends.

The term EDU (Educational Development Unit) has been used throughout for simplicity. Such units are sometimes referred to as TSU (teaching support units) or recently as EPD (Educational Professional Development) units by Knight, who speaks of 'educational and professional development personnel whose job is to shape the professional formation of those who teach and otherwise support student learning' (Knight 2006: 30). In some cases, the ED function is understood as a sub-section of the work of a staff development unit focused on academic staff, but educational development is here taken to include organizational development and support for student learning (D'Andrea and Gosling 2005: 202). For the purposes of this study, an EDU is understood as being any organisational unit with responsibility for educational development, which is defined as the 'systematic and scholarly support for improving both educational processes and the practices and capabilities of educators' (Stefani 2003: 10). At the risk of some circularity, the study throws further light on what is understood by educational development by considering the range of functions that EDUs are currently performing.

The use of a survey instrument does carry some risks and has some limitations. In particular, it is possible that respondents may understand questions rather differently and answer accordingly. The aggregation of data would disguise these differences in interpretation of the question. There is some evidence that this was indeed a problem with the question asking about 'other staff with an educational development role'. Secondly, survey instruments tend to contain hidden assumptions in the question asked. For example, asking to which policies the EDU has contributed implies that involvement in the development of policies is one of the functions of an EDU. Thirdly, when the data are classified and aggregated, there is the risk that the researcher imposes an

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<sup>2</sup> Gloucestershire, Kent, Oxford Brookes, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Southampton

understanding of the data that departs from the meaning intended by the respondent. In this study, the writer has attempted to be conscious of these limitations of survey data (Cohen and Manion 1994).

## 2. Educational development centres today

### 2.1 Growth of EDUs

It is not the place here to explore in details the origins and history of educational development in the UK (Elton 1995; Gosling 1997), but a summary may be useful, if only to remind us how recently this term has come into existence. Central staff development units had begun to be formed in 1960, often with a focus on the use of educational technologies. The first Teaching Methods Unit was founded at the Institute of Education by Ruth Beard in 1965, soon after to be followed by the Institute for Educational Technology at the University of Surrey, by Lewis Elton. In the seventies and eighties very few units existed in the UK, although many were being created in the USA. It was not until the nineties that there was a significant growth in numbers.

Interest in teaching quality had been growing in the eighties, particularly as a result of the work of Entwistle at Lancaster, Marton and Saljo's research on approaches to study (Marton and Saljo 1976) and Gibbs' work on enhancing student learning at Oxford Polytechnic (Gibbs 1981). The Universities Staff Development Unit (USDU [3]) and the Standing Conference for Educational Development (SCED) (later to become SEDA [4]) were also instrumental in the growing interest in teaching and learning and higher education, particularly as class sizes began to grow. The Warnock Report (PCFC 1990) in England stimulated further interest in teaching quality in the Polytechnics (all of which became universities in 1992). As a result of Warnock, the PCFC's set-up a national staff development project called the Teaching More Students Project. Led by Graham Gibbs and the Oxford Centre for Staff Development team it included 6 publications and 100 workshops to about 3,000 staff. In the pre-1992 universities, significant funding was being poured into the Teaching and Learning Technology Project (TLTP) and the Computers in Teaching Initiative (CTI) centres, which were the forerunners of the LTSN Subject Centres [5]. Meanwhile, the MacFarlane Report in Scotland (1992) was influential in advocating greater use of computer-based learning as a response to an 'expanding higher education system'.

The National Committee of Inquiry for Higher Education (Dearing 1997) was a key report for the most recent phase of creation of EDUs, since it recommended that all institutions should have some form of professional development for all new staff. Unlike many previous recommendations, this one has been remarkable in the extent to which it has been successfully fulfilled (Bamber 2002). HEFCE began a period of funding educational development with the first phase of FDTL in 1995. The TQEF was officially announced in 1999 (HEFCE 1999: 48), although it incorporated a number of funded activities which dated back at least five years before. This initiative was presented as having three levels or 'strands'. These were the subject, the institutional and the individual levels. Perhaps most influential on the development of EDUs was the institutional strand, which allocated funding in support of Learning and Teaching Strategies. The LTSN (the 24 Subject Centres) and the Institute for Learning and Teaching were both created in 2000. The Higher Education Academy was formed to

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<sup>3</sup> Later to become the University and Colleges Staff Development Association or UCoSDA

<sup>4</sup> Staff and Educational Development Association

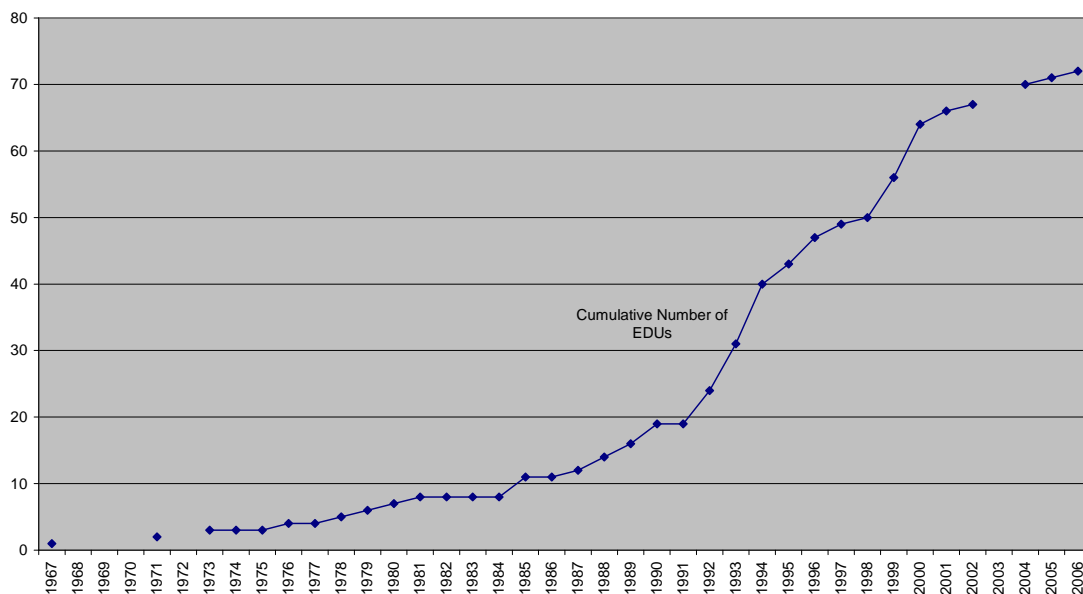
<sup>5</sup> Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN)

amalgamate these previously independent organisations in 2004. Finally, £340 million was allocated to the creation of 74 CETLs (see Section Five for a more detailed discussion of the influences of these recent funding initiatives).

It is a matter of conjecture whether it has been as a response to the pressures created by the massification of higher education (as reflected in various government reports), the reductions in funding per student alongside the diversification of the student profile, the growth of educational technologies, or the funding made available for educational development projects, that has led to the growth of EDUs since the early nineties. It is now rare in the UK today for any medium to large size higher education institution not to have an EDU, and in smaller specialist colleges the ED function exists even if there are insufficient resources to have a separate unit.

The chart below tracks the remarkable growth in the formation of EDUs over a 40-year period since 1967 according to the information provided by respondents in the sample of 75 institutions represented in the three HEDG surveys. However, in nearly all cases, some predecessor activity existed prior to the creation of the EDU, for example, an individual with staff development responsibilities. The chart, therefore, does not show when the function commenced, only when the EDU was formed for the first time.

Chart 1 Cumulative number of EDUs since 1967



We can see that by 1990, 19 of the 75 EDUs in the sample had been formed, but in the next 5 years another 24 had been created, and another 21 were created between 1996-2000, so the number in the sample had risen to 63 by the end of 2000. Since then the growth has slackened only slightly, with another nine being created in the period 2001-2005.

During this period of rapid growth, the names of EDUs have changed, revealing different emphases and fashions in educational development. In the 1980s there were several teaching or learning 'methods units' (for example at London Institute, Oxford Brookes, Central England, North East London Polytechnic). Today there are none (known to the author). In 1995, 13 out of the 23 units included 'educational development' within their

title, compared to only 9 out of 43 in the 2006 sample, whereas 'learning and teaching' features in the name of 17 units, although this is a smaller proportion (39.5%) than in 2000, when the proportion was 57%. 'Enhancement' rather than 'development' has come to be used more recently (seven units referred to Quality Enhancement in their name). Since 2000, five of the new or reformed units use the phrase Learning and/or Teaching Enhancement. This seems to follow the adoption of the phrase 'quality enhancement' by the QAA [6] since 2002, particularly in Scotland, where Institutional Review is now said to be 'enhancement led'. There are fewer units that include 'Staff Development' in the title, which may suggest that the earlier narrower definition of educational development has fallen out of favour. 'Professional Development' or 'Academic Practice' are sometimes used in preference to educational development, in order to signal a wider interpretation of the remit to cover all aspects of the academic role and not simply learning, teaching, and assessment. It is also worth noting that in some of the oldest universities educational development centres have been created with a strong commitment to research.

## 2.2 Institutional location and lines of reporting

It is not clear how much can be read into the institutional location of EDUs, since institutional structures are understood very differently across a very diverse sector. Since EDUs seem to be subject to reorganisation every few years, as we shall discuss later, precise location may not signify very much. However, there has tended to be an assumption that a stand-alone service which reports directly to the PVC/deputy principal has a higher status and greater freedom than one which is within a larger organisational unit, whether this be another central service such as Registry or an academic unit such as a Faculty of Education.

Respondents were asked whether their EDU was a department/centre within an academic Faculty or School (and, if so, to state the name of the Faculty/School), or a 'stand-alone central service', or a 'central service within a larger organisational unit (such as Registry, Library, Human Resources) and, if so, state the name of the larger unit. Alternatively, they were asked to name 'any other' if none of the above categories applied. Using these definitions the results for 2006 are shown below:

Table 1A Institutional location of EDUs

	total	old	new	colleges	%
Central service	19	11	8		49%
Stand-alone unit	16	5	10	1	39%
Department in academic Faculty	5	2	3		12%

The location of the central services which were not 'stand alone' were as follows:

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<sup>6</sup> QAA – Quality Assurance Agency

Table 1B Location of EDUs classified as 'central services'

Library/information services	4
Human Resources (HR)/personnel	4
Professional/academic development	4
Quality	1
Registry/academic office	3
Education Faculty	2

In so far as it is possible to detect a trend, it seems to be that in the pre-1992 universities there have been more stand-alone EDUs created with fewer of them embedded in Human Resources (12% in 2006 and 17% in 2000) or Registry (5% in 2006 and 8% in 2000). Although these differences may merely be an accident of the samples, it may indicate a rising status for educational development in traditional universities.

EDUs in academic departments, Schools, or Faculties, may be in Education, as might be expected, but they may also be in the Faculty of Arts, Lifelong Learning, Health and Social Care, or Social and Historical Studies. These locations are typically a 'marriage of convenience' in order to enable the Postgraduate Certificate to be subject to academic approval and quality assurance processes.

Just over three quarters (77%) of Heads of EDUs reported directly to the PVC or VP, but of these nearly half (35% of the whole sample) had dual lines of reporting. In these cases, Heads of EDUs reported to a director of a service, or a head or Dean of an academic department/School, as well as to the PVC or VP. The remaining 21% reported only to their line manager, such as Director of HR, Academic or Deputy Academic Registrar.

The findings of this survey suggest that a significantly higher proportion of EDUs are reporting directly to the senior manager (PVC or VP) responsible for academic affairs or Learning and Teaching (it was 45% in 2000). This may reflect the fact that in 2000, Learning and Teaching Strategies were new to most English institutions and that they are now more securely embedded within senior management responsibilities.

Further evidence of the status of EDUs is in the job title of the respondents. Sixteen were 'Directors' and 17 were 'Heads', 2 more were associate or co-managers, 3 were 'Deans' and one was a VP. Only four respondents were 'advisers', two 'coordinators' or 'educational development officers'. The level of seniority of 'directors' or 'heads' posts was not indicated. In the 2000 survey, 57% of the colleges' respondents, 48% in new but only 17% in old universities, regarded themselves as 'senior management'. There is no reason to think that these ratios have changed, which reflect the relative position of EDUs in new and old universities. In post-1992 institutions, Heads of Educational Development (HEDs) are more likely to be included in senior management teams than in the old universities.

### 2.3 Organisational change

The close relationship of most EDUs with strategic management has not reduced the threat of re-organisation to which EDUs seem to be particularly prone. A striking finding of the survey over ten years is that the rate at which EDUs are being formed or reformed has not lessened to any extent. In 1995, 73% of the sample had been created in 'its present form' within the previous 5 years. In 2000 the figure was 63%, and in 2006 it was 61%. However, there is a difference. In 2001, 36% of the sample had been created within the last year, probably reflecting the fact that the TQEF institutional learning and teaching strategy funding had come on stream from 1999.

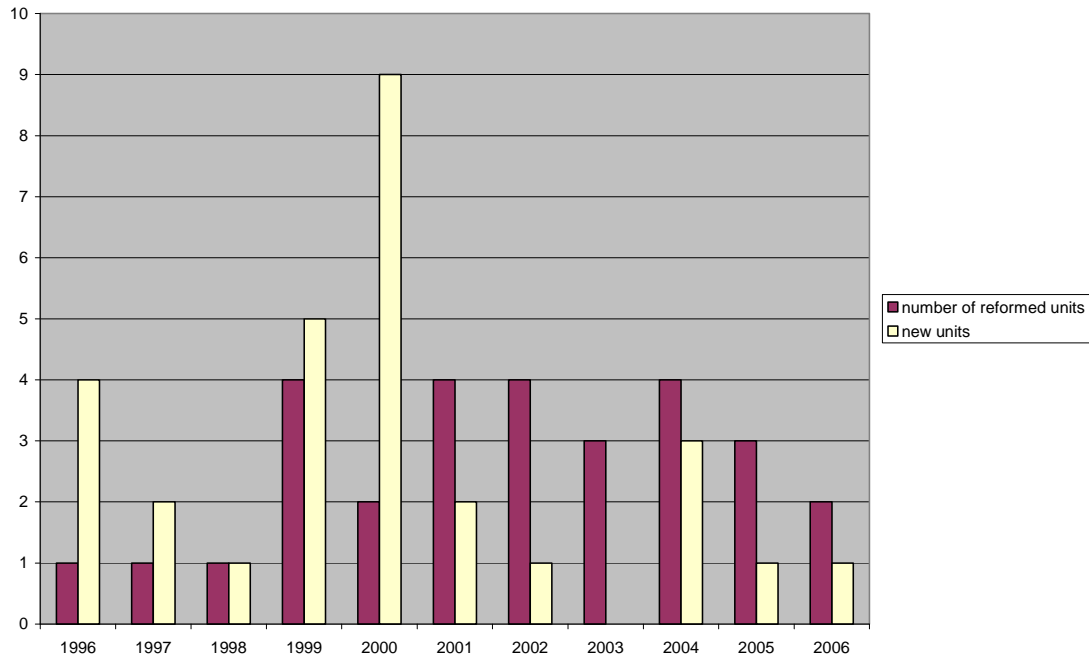
Table 2 Length of time the unit has existed in its present form

Years in existence	2006	%	2001	%
<1	3	8	17	36
1 to <5	20	53	13	27.5
5 to <10	10	26	14	29
10 to <15	3	8	7	15
15>	2	5	5	10.5
Total	38		47	

The pace of change can be illustrated another way. If we compare the number of re-organised units with new units created since 1996, within the sample of 75 institutions who had responded to one or more of the three surveys, we can see that since 2000 (when 9 new units were formed) the majority of the organisational change has been in re-organising existing units (see chart 2 below). It may be that the acceleration in the number of reorganisations of EDUs relates to the introduction of the TQEF funding for institutional Learning and Teaching Strategies, which signalled a new importance to EDUs. Or this restructuring may have related to the growth of accredited professional development courses. There are insufficient data to be clear about this point, nevertheless we can see that 20 EDUs were reorganised since 2000.



Chart 2 New and reformed units since 1996



By comparing the results of three surveys over 10 years it is possible to chart the rate of changes in EDUs. It is important to note that all but four of the 'new' units reported in the 2006 survey had predecessor units. EDUs are rarely created ab initio. They often derive from the work of individual enthusiasts who grow the role or they are created by reorganising existing units. If we look at the pattern of reorganisations that EDUs have undergone, we find examples of both amalgamation and disaggregation. In recent years, the most common function with which EDUs have been amalgamated is with quality assurance units – typically to create quality assurance and enhancement units. However, others have had the Quality Assurance (QA) function removed and others have always wanted to keep the QA function at arms-length! EDUs have also been linked with educational technologies and with staff development units. EDUs seem to swing between amalgamating with these functions and then being separated from them – largely reflecting the views of the senior manager responsible.

It seems that there is no trend in one direction either towards or away from amalgamations. Within the sample, there is an example in one university of a large amalgamation of functions carried out in one reorganisation, while at another there has been a steady accretion of function to the EDU over several years. However, some larger educational development units which have previously had a wide range of functions have been mostly dismantled.

The implications of the instability of EDUs within the organisational structures of universities is profound. For those EDUs who find themselves under threat, it requires directors of ED to become political operators protecting their staff from the whims of senior managers and the changing fashions of organisational theory. It creates a deep sense of insecurity and calls into question the value the institution places on ED. Educational development staff in this situation can become demoralised and isolated.

For those EDUs where there is a strong relationship with key senior managers, where they are given resources and a central role in the university's development, the problems are more about managing the expectations (sometimes unrealistic) that are placed on the unit and fighting a rear-guard action against those who are suspicious of central units becoming too large and apparently too powerful. I return to these issues in more detail in the next section.

## **2.4 Responsibilities of EDUs**

In the 2000 survey it was clear that two functions, improving teaching and learning methods across the institution and providing staff development relating to teaching and learning, were endorsed by all the respondents as being central to their role. Also, all respondents said that it was their role to 'encourage innovation and change in teaching and learning'. All the 'new' and the 'old' universities, and 80% of the colleges and the Robbins universities, also said that they were expected to promote the use of educational technologies. A significant change from the 1995 survey was the finding that 70% of the colleges, 80% of the 'new', 90% of the old, and 100% of the Robbins universities, said that their remit included 'to carry out and/or encourage research into teaching and learning'. Whereas 100% of the ex-polytechnics were concerned to 'facilitate the design and development of the curriculum', in the pre-1992 universities this fell to 70%. There were some variations between the different types of institutions. For example, whereas all the colleges and Robbins respondents, and over 80% of the old universities, said that they were expected 'to encourage the development of open and distance learning', only 12% of the 'new' universities confirmed that their remit included this function.

It was noticeable in 2000 that the ex-polytechnics tended to have a stronger role than in the older universities in supporting the bids for, and the implementation of, projects funded by FDTL and TQEF. Also, in the new universities it was much more likely that the EDU had been wholly or primarily responsible for the development of the Teaching and Learning Strategy.

In the 2006 survey, a slightly different approach was taken in order to explore the perceptions of Heads about the level of responsibility EDUs were given for different institutional objectives relating to teaching and learning. Respondents were asked to identify whether listed activities were 'fully our responsibility', a 'shared responsibility', 'not our responsibility but we contribute' or 'not part of our work.' 'Responsibility' was defined as being 'accountable for the performance in this area, even though it requires collaboration with others (as most educational development does!)

Asking the question in this way revealed the extent to which EDUs saw their central roles as a 'shared responsibility'. Thus 'to improve teaching and learning quality' and 'to encourage innovation and change in teaching and learning' were cited as a shared responsibility by 30 of the 43 institutions, and 'fully our responsibility' by 8 (for the first) and 11 (for the second) institutions.

By comparing the responsibilities most often mentioned as being 'full', 'shared' and 'contribute' (see Table 3A) we can see that professional development of staff is seen as the most important of the responsibilities which EDUs regard as fully theirs, whereas the wider institutional roles relating to teaching and learning are regarded as a shared

responsibility. Work in quality assurance and learning technologies is typically regarded as a responsibility to which EDUs contribute.

Table 3A Levels of responsibility in descending order of importance

Full responsibility	Shared responsibility	Contribute
Provide Teaching and Learning (T & L) professional development	Encourage innovation in T & L	Prepare institution and departments for QAA audit
Initial professional development of teaching staff	Improve teaching and learning quality	Implement quality assurance processes
Training for Postgraduates (PGs) who teach	Implementation of the T & L strategy	Advise on/monitor quality of teaching spaces and equipment
Promote Scholarship of T & L (not for Research Assessment Exercise (RAE))	Carry out research in teaching and learning	Encourage the development of open and distance learning
Promote use of learning technologies	Evaluation of teaching and learning activities	Provide training in the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for students and staff
New staff induction programme	Promote Scholarship of T & L (not for RAE)	Promote use of learning technologies
Encourage innovation in T & L	Encourage the development of open and distance learning	Carry out research in teaching and learning
Implementation of the T & L strategy	Promote use of learning technologies	Evaluation of teaching and learning activities
Master's/Dip in learning and teaching in Higher Education (HE)	Provide new staff induction programme	Promote research in T & L for possible entry to RAE
Improve teaching and learning quality	Provide T & L professional development	Encourage equal opportunities

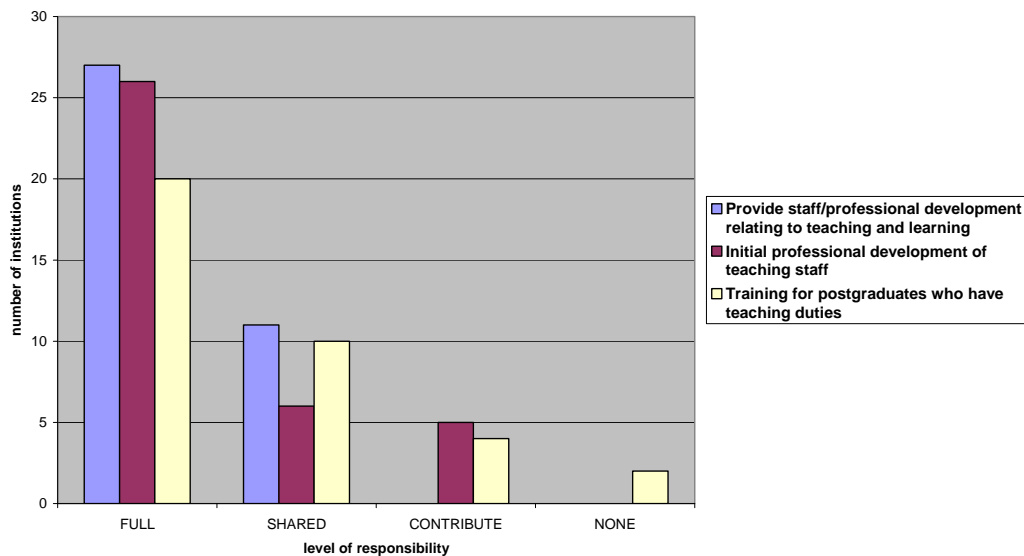
If we combine the most often mentioned full and shared responsibilities, we find the following top-ten responsibilities of EDUs. In the columns are the numbers of institutions citing this as a full or shared responsibility.

Table 3B: Combined full and shared responsibilities (n=43)

	Full	Shared	Combined
Encourage innovation in T & L	11	30	41
Implementation of the T & L strategy	11	28	39
Improve teaching and learning quality	8	30	38
Provide T & L professional development	27	11	38
Promote scholarship of T & L	17	18	35
Initial professional development of teaching staff	26	6	32
Promote use of learning technologies	14	17	31
Training for PGs who teach	20	10	30
Carry out research in teaching and learning	7	22	29
Carry out/commission evaluation of T & L	5	22	29

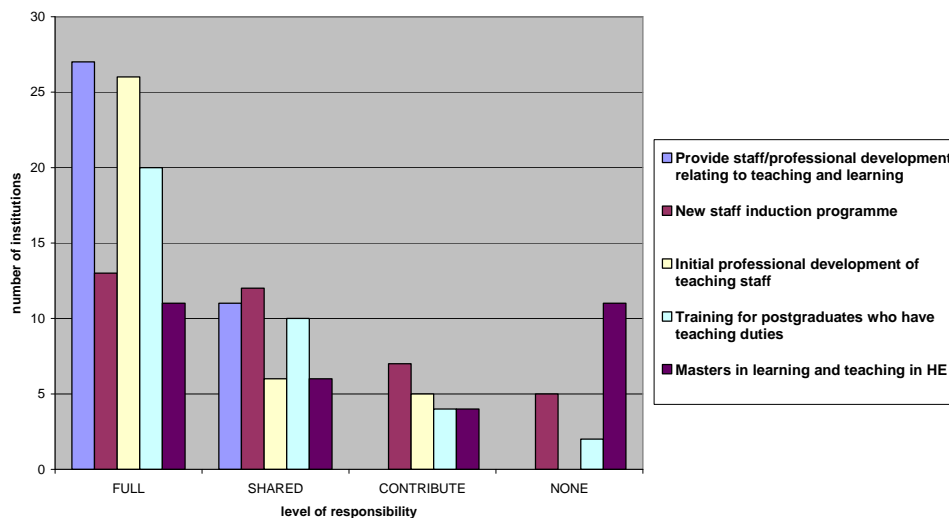
The three ways in which EDUs most commonly support teaching and learning are by (1) providing staff/professional development relating to teaching and learning; (2) having responsibility for initial professional development of teaching staff (e.g. through a Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert)), and (3) having responsibility for training for postgraduates who have teaching duties (see Chart 3)

Chart 3: Supporting teaching and learning (n=43)



If we break down what is meant by 'professional development of staff' further, we find that approximately 70% of EDUs have full responsibility for initial professional development (e.g. PGCert) but only 11 EDUs (26%) had full responsibility for the PG Dip/MA (MSc or Med) in learning and teaching in HE (see Chart 4).

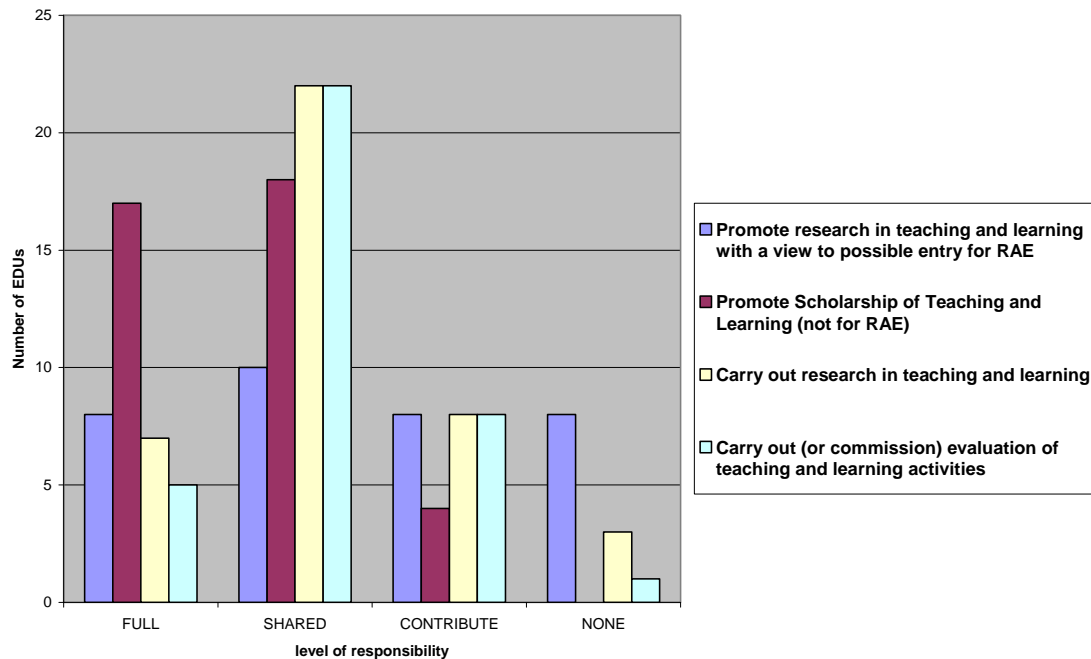
Chart 4: Professional Development (n=36)



A further 11 had shared responsibility for the Master's level provision, which suggests that about half of EDUs are providing accredited awards beyond the initial professional development award. About three quarters of EDUs were fully responsible for the professional development and just over half for a programme for postgraduates who have teaching responsibilities.

The rise in interest in research into teaching and learning and the scholarship of teaching continues. 42.5% considered that promoting the scholarship of teaching was fully their responsibility and another 45% saw it as a shared responsibility (see Chart 5).

Chart 5 Responsibility for research and evaluation of teaching (n=40)



However, fewer saw it as their responsibility to promote research in teaching that would be eligible for the RAE, and fewer than one in five EDUs saw it has their responsibility to carry out research themselves, though 55% saw this as a shared responsibility. It would seem that, despite the growing interest in research in teaching and learning, most EDUs are not conceptualising themselves as research departments, rather they see themselves as facilitating, encouraging and collaborating on research projects. (See Section Four for further discussion of this point.)

It is also worth noting the responsibilities that seem to be disappearing from EDUs. Whereas in 1995 14 EDUs were responsible for study skills provision for students, in 2006 only four had this responsibility. Only three EDUs had full responsibility for ICT/audio visual production services for teachers, an area of work much more commonly found in the early years of EDUs. In 1995, six units were involved in Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS) systems, but now only one EDU in the sample had this responsibility. It seems that the responsibilities which many early EDUs had acquired from their previous history have, in most cases, been separated out.

The trend is towards a clearer and more focused conception of the role of EDUs, which has two major strands: (1) professional development of staff relating to learning and teaching and other academic duties, and (2) a shared strategic responsibility for implementation of the learning, teaching and assessment strategy, encouragement of innovation and enhancing teaching quality.

The general categories of responsibilities sometimes failed to capture the rich variety of activities being undertaken, as the following comment illustrates:

We run several grant schemes; we facilitate several educational development networks; [Continuing Professional Development] (CPD) activity; one to one advice/consultancy & working with programme teams; input via several committees & working parties on educational development matters e.g. using computers in examinations, developing questions for student on line course evaluation, writing a Learning To Learn supplement for PGT students etc (pre-1992 university).

The fact that an EDU has a remit to carry out a given responsibility does not mean that EDUs feel that they are satisfactorily staffed to carry out the remit. Comments such as the one below illustrate the gulf there can be between a formal remit and the ability to carry it out.

The amount of responsibility that this small team carries for teaching & learning quality enhancement, the Teaching Fellows Scheme, [Personal Development Planning] PDP, the [Virtual Learning Environment] VLE, the university student survey, and so on, leaves the dissatisfying feeling that it is not possible to put enough good quality time & energy into one thing (post-1992 university).

One area of responsibility around which there can be some tension is for the Postgraduate Certificate for new staff, as this comment illustrates:

Although we are responsible for the initial teaching induction programme, teaching of postgrads as teachers & CPD in learning, teaching & student support we do not run the PGCert of the LTHE which sits in an academic department. Historical reasons brought this about when predecessor Department of Learning Development was considered to be failing. However, we have not yet managed to get the responsibility back (post-1992 university).

In many universities there is good cooperation between the central unit and an academic department with responsibility for the initial professional development of new staff, but, in some cases, Certificate courses can be the site of conflict.

## **2.5 Staffing of educational development**

The data on staffing are complex and difficult to summarise because of the large variations in size and functions. There are a number of reasons for this. FTEs are not necessarily a good guide to the numbers of staff involved. For example, in one institution 4.8 FTEs were spread among 9 staff, because it included 5 people counted as 0.2 FTE. Secondly, the distinction between 'academic' and 'academic-related' roles varies between institutions and between the pre and post-1992 sectors. In some institutions, new categories of staff have been created as a result of new 'framework agreements'. Also the designation of 'manager' roles clearly varied considerably. In some institutions roles were categorised as 'Head of x' and in others there were no divisions into sub-units with their own 'heads'.

The summary statistics are as follows. The overall average size of unit is 10.3 FTEs. In the new universities, the average size is 13.1 FTEs and 8.7 in the pre-1992 universities.

The range is between 1 and 58 in the post-1992 institutions and between 1 and 20.3 in pre-1992 HEIs. If we exclude the one post-1992 university unit with 58 staff (which includes 16 e-learning staff and 15 study skills support tutors), the range is between 1 and 21, which is almost the same as in the old universities.

**Educational developers** In the new universities, in addition to the director, there is an average of 2.5 academic posts devoted to educational development, with a range from 0-6. In pre-1992 the figure is similar (2.65) among the 12 EDUs that included academic staff (a further 7 had none). However, 14 pre-1992 EDUs had an average of 2.3 academic-related posts. If we exclude 2 old university departments with only 1 member of staff, the average number of staff available for development work is 3.8. The equivalent figure for the post-1992 universities is 2.9. This suggests that although new universities may have more staff overall, they do not necessarily have more academic staff available to the key educational development work.

**E-learning** Thirteen of the new universities had staff with some kind of e-learning or learning technology support role, but only eight had someone with an e-learning development role. One post-1992 university had 9 staff, another had 4.5, and another 3, the remainder only 1 FTE or less. The number of technology support staff was an average of 4.6 in 10 EDUs (though without the 1 EDU with 15, the average falls to 3.5).

In the sample of 21 pre-1992 universities, there were 7 which had e-learning development staff – 4 of these had only 1 staff, 1 had 2 people, 2 had 4, and 1 had 7 people (5.5 FTEs). There were only 4 with technical support posts in the EDU.

**Research** Nine of the new universities had at least one person with a research role. Perhaps surprisingly only two in the sample of pre-1992 universities had researchers. One had 1 person and the other 4.5. However, this does not take account of the research role that was being undertaken by the director and other academic staff.

**Secretarial/administrative staff** Of the new universities, two did not list any administrative support staff and neither did three of the pre-1992 universities. The average number of admin posts was 3, but one EDU had 10, another 15. Without these 2 places, the average falls to 1.8, which suggests that most EDUs are operating with relatively little administrative support. In the old universities there was an average of two admin staff.

**Distributed development staff** An assumption was made that if the survey only considered staff within the EDU, there was a risk of under-estimating the volume of activity across the whole institution devoted to educational development. Respondents were therefore asked to identify staff who have a 'development role' but are not counted against the EDU's budget. About half of the respondents (21) referred to staff who have a Faculty or departmental learning and teaching role, sometimes referred to as Teaching Fellows, Advisers, or Coordinators. Second most common (17 respondents, 40%) were individuals or teams of people with an e-learning, media, or learning technology responsibility. Also mentioned were: CETL staff (14), National Teaching Fellows (10), FDTL staff (5), HEA Subject Centre staff (4), other internally funded project staff (4).

Interestingly, only seven mentioned a Dean or PVC, and another four referred to Associate Deans for Learning and Teaching or Chairs of Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees. Only two referred to staff development personnel in this context, and two



mentioned staff in the 'Quality' office. For three respondents, library staff were significant allies, and four cited staff with a student skills or learning advisory role.

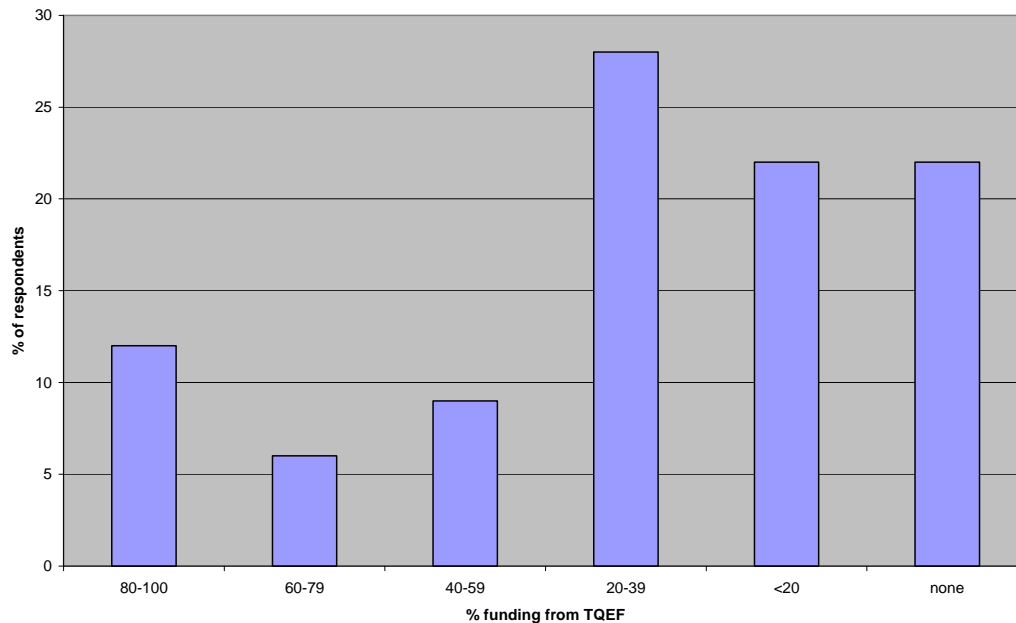
There are variations on the 'hub and spoke model' apparent from this survey. Of the 21 institutions who reported that they had a scheme to appoint or nominate academic staff with an ED role in the Faculties or departments, 2 had more than 30, 4 had between 20 and 29, 9 had between 10 and 19, and 6 had fewer than 10. However, these numbers disguise some significant variations in the schemes. One model in operation was to have a small number of staff with a clearly identified role and a fractional secondment of 0.5 or 0.8 to enable close liaison with the EDU. Another model was to have larger numbers but a less defined role and no specified fractional secondment. Some Teaching Fellow schemes, for example, were awarded to full-time academics. Another model was to have an appointee in each organizational unit (School or Faculty) with a responsibility for coordinating Learning and Teaching, but typically with a small fraction of his/her time to fulfill this role (varying between 0.1 to 0.25).

Respondents were asked to estimate the level of contact they had with the staff listed and also how they assessed the level of their impact. Most claimed to have a very close relationship with Teaching and Learning Coordinators, but the relationship with Teaching Fellows (national and local) seemed to be more variable. Most commented that it was too early to tell what the level of contact would be with CETL staff, except where the EDUs were closely tied in to the CETL.

## **2.6 Funding**

As we have seen, funding initiatives have clearly influenced the formation and development of EDUs. In 1995, it was the Enterprise in Higher Education (EHE) initiative that had been the major funding source from which some EDUs emerged (10 out of the 23 (43%) referred to EHE as a predecessor activity). By 2000, the key influence in English institutions was TQEF. In 2006, TQEF seems to be reducing in importance, since 22% of EDUs said their reliance on TQEF was 0, and another 22% said it constituted less than 20% of their budgets. (See Chart 6).

Chart 6 Reliance on TQEF funding (England only n=29)

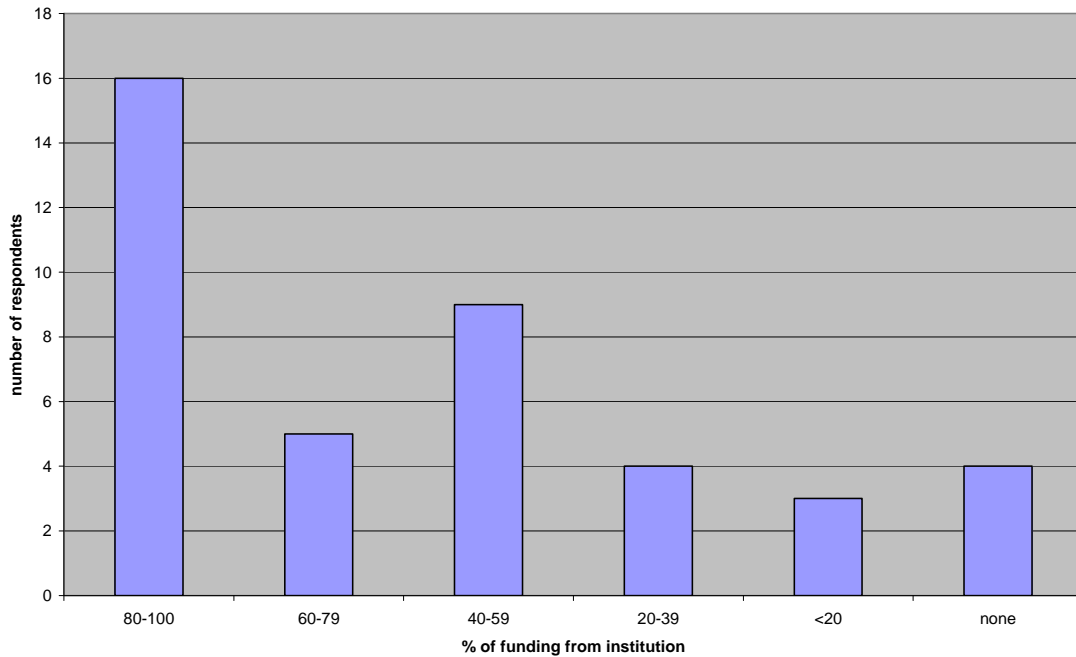


However, at the other end of the spectrum, 12% of the sample are reliant on TQEF for 80-100% of their funding and are clearly vulnerable to changes in HEFCE policy relating to TQEF. The majority of English EDUs continue to rely on TQEF for a significant proportion of their activities (as opposed to their staffing budget) and would undoubtedly suffer severe cuts without that source of funding. As the evaluators of TQEF suggested,

TQEF support helped to make more things possible in a quicker timescale. Second, by earmarking money for learning and teaching, TQEF funding sent important messages to HEIs which would not have been the case if the funds had simply been added to the formula allocation. In some research intensive institutions the TQEF funds were particularly valuable in flagging the importance of enhancing teaching, and signalling that it was acceptable to devote central university resources to this kind of activity (HEFCE 2005).

Nevertheless, the trend seems to be towards EDUs becoming 'embedded' in core funding, perhaps in anticipation of the ending of TQEF. Indicative of this trend is that 39% said that 80-100% of their funding came from core funding and a further 12% received 60-80% from this source (see Chart 7). Four institutions received no budget from their institution.

Chart 7 Core funding from institution (n=41)



Alternative sources of funding contributed only a small proportion to EDUs' budgets (see Table 4). Six old universities and 7 post-1992 referred to 'other funding council initiatives' as contributing less than 20% of the budget. The RAE was only a source of income for one post-1992 university. Consultancy work contributed less than 20% to the budgets of 7 new and 2 pre-1992 institutions, but in only 2 cases, both new, did consultancy make a significant difference to the overall budget (up to 40% of the total budget). In one case, the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) had been significant.

The most recent large funding initiative in England, the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, was based on a competitive bidding process. This means that EDUs which were embedded in a successful CETL bid have had access to very significant funding. This was the case in two EDUs within the survey and another in the interview sample. In one case, the unit has actually become a 'Centre for Excellence'. In these cases, the award of a CETL has brought significant funding to the EDU.

Table 4 EDUs: Sources of funding

	Core	TQEF*	Initiatives**	RAE	Teaching	Consultancy	Other
80-100	16	4					
60-79	5	2	1				
40-59	9	3	2				
20-39	4	9	5		1	2	
<20	3	7	13	1	6	9	3
none	4	7					

\* English institutions only

\*\* Other funding council initiatives

In other cases, the award of one, or more, CETLs has brought in very significant resources for ED activity, but has had the effect of distributing the function to alternative 'hubs', which may or may not have a close relationship with the central unit. In these cases, the EDU had not necessarily benefited financially from the existence of the CETL. However, the majority of institutions do not have CETL money and so, unlike the TQEF institutional funding, which was distributed by a formula to all, most EDUs have not received CETL funds.

Respondents were asked to say whether they felt their funding was 'very secure', 'moderately secure', 'uncertain', or 'very insecure'. The results are as follows:

Very secure	16%
Moderately secure	63%
Uncertain	14%
Very insecure	7%

There are different ways of reading these results. It may be encouraging that 16% feel very secure, and given that people are likely to be cautious in responding to this question, it may be encouraging that almost 80% are moderately or very secure. Equally, it may be regarded as alarming that 3 institutions in the sample were 'very insecure', and 21% are uncertain or very insecure.

## 2.7 Profile of Heads of Educational Development

What picture emerges from the sample of the people who are Heads of Educational Development? The title of the post occupied by respondents were as follows:

Adviser/developer	4
Head/director	31
Dean	3
Deputy principal	1
Manager	1

There is evidence that it is a role more likely to be occupied by women than by men, since in this sample, 62% were female and 38% male. Over half (53%) had been

awarded a PhD, while for 41% the highest level of qualification achieved was an MA or MPhil. 33% had a teaching qualification and 18% had a professional qualification deriving from their previous experience, for example in training, human resources management, information and communication technology (ICT).

The vast majority of heads in the sample (86%) had held an academic post in higher education, 5 as a head of an academic department, and a further 3 people had taught in Further Education (FE) or, in one case, a school, which means that 93% had held a teaching role. A significant number (37%) had teaching experience outside of HE, mostly in FE. Nearly 20% had held a staff development or training role.

Table 5 Previous experience of Heads of EDUs

Academic role	37	86%
Teaching outside HE	16	37%
Training, staff devt	8	19%
Head of department/Dean	5	12%
Admin/registry	5	12%
Researcher	5	12%
Other role outside education	5	12%
IT/e-learning role	4	9%

In this sample, 25 (58%) had been in their current post for less than 5 years, reflecting the continuously changing environment of educational development. A further 16 (37%) had been in post for 5 or more years, but less than 10 years. Only two had been in post for longer. The equivalent figures for 2000 were 47% less than 5 years, 30% 6-10 years, and 22% for longer. The current sample clearly has a higher proportion in recently created posts. This may simply be an accident of the sample, or may be further evidence of the continual process of re-organisation to which EDUs have been subject.

However, when it comes to the respondents' length of experience in educational development, the picture, in 2006, is rather different. Only 3 people had less than 5 years' experience, whereas 75% had between 5 and 14 years' experience. A further 8 (18%) had 15 or more years' experience.

Table 6 Heads of EDUs: Length of time in post

	Time in post (2000)	Time in post (2006)	ED Experience 2006
<1	27	16	0
1 to <5	20	42	7
5 to <10	30	37	47
10 to <15	14	2	28
15>	8	2	18

These figures point to a growing cadre of well qualified and experienced staff with a knowledge of educational development functions.

## 2.8 Conclusions

The growth of new educational development units is slowing slightly, which is not surprising given that most institutions now have some form of provision to support teaching and learning. The average size of EDUs has continued to grow, with units in new universities tending to be slightly bigger than in pre-1992 universities. However, EDUs continue to suffer from considerable organisational volatility, as the number of reorganised units bears witness. It appears that a new senior executive can change the fortunes of an EDU in a short space of time:

Up until this year it (the EDU) was on a steady climb. The key influence has been the change in executive overt support for the function and increased power base of the Academic Deans (post-1992 university).

There seems to be an emerging trend towards a more distributed model of educational development (discussed in the next section), with more development work being undertaken by academic staff appointed or nominated within Faculties or schools – Teaching Fellows or Learning and Teaching Coordinators or Advisers.

A second trend is that the remits of EDUs seem to be focused more narrowly on the professional development of staff, encouraging innovation and enhancement in teaching and learning, and overseeing implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. Research in teaching and learning has continued to rise in its significance as a responsibility of EDUs, and the idea of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning has become an increasingly popular vehicle for furthering the aims of EDUs.

### **3. Institutional environment for educational development**

In this section we will consider the unique position occupied by EDUs in higher education institutions, and the issues this creates. As we have seen, EDUs vary considerably in their size and institutional location, and these parameters are open to sometimes rapid and alarming change. We begin this section by considering the institutional position of ED, and the increasing use of networks of staff who have a development role but are not managed by EDUs. We consider what conclusions we can draw about the institutional environment of ED, the crucial issue of the relationship of EDUs with senior managers, and the role of EDUs in developing policy within their institutions.

#### **3.1 Educational development's place within institutions**

There are a number of key issues that are raised by the findings of the survey about the structure of EDUs. The survey does not allow any conclusions to be drawn about the relative success of different structures, since it does not attempt to measure the success of EDUs. There is no agreement currently about what would count as success measures, partly because there are so many variations in aims and functions of EDUs, and because there are a host of institutional factors that would need to be considered before it was possible to judge the relative success of units.

However, the survey does offer some clues about the variables that are influencing the functioning of EDUs. One is the structural location of the EDU. This is partly a matter of the relation of the EDU to senior managers and other central services and academic structures (such as Faculties, Schools and Departments) and partly about the distribution of the ED functions between a central unit and academic structures.

It has been argued that Faculty development programmes in the USA 'occupy a unique place in the structure of an institution because they serve the entire academic community in the common cause of improving the education that students' receive' (Sorcinelli et al. 2006: 53).

This 'unique location' applies equally to EDUs in the UK. This is the source of both their strength and their vulnerability and is also a significant factor in defining their character, function and location. Given that EDUs are intended to 'serve the entire academic community', is this a reason to be a 'stand-alone' unit? The advantage would appear to be that when the EDU is independent of other structures it reduces the risk of it being seen to be a tool of some sectional interest in the minds of those who are not sure what it does. For example, if the ED function is part of a unit devoted to 'quality', then some of the associations that are triggered by quality assurance, and these are often negative associations (Morley 2003), may colour perceptions of what the EDU is trying to achieve. On the other hand, when the quality agenda shifts towards 'enhancement', as in the current Scottish system, then the arguments for joining these two functions becomes much stronger (Ross et al. 2007).

A second function with which EDUs have been amalgamated, or, just as often separated, is general staff development. Many EDUs in the pre-1992 universities have grown out of staff development units and, in some cases, the ED function remains within a staff development office.

EDUs have also had a mixed on-off relationship with educational technologies. Several units originated from a technology-based operation (originally with the emphasis on audiovisual (AV) aids and production) and some have always maintained a strong interest in promoting the use of educational technologies. Some universities have seen the increasing focus on e-learning as a reason to amalgamate the ED function with learning technologies, while others see it as a reason to separate them. In some institutions, ED has been narrowly defined as supporting learning technologies, with other kinds of educational development seen as a lesser importance. The key issue is whether it is the enthusiasts for the technology who are driving the expansion or the enthusiasts for teaching and learning who see how to exploit the potential of e-learning. Probably the greatest success is found where an appropriate balance is found between these two polarised positions and organisational structures are found to reflect this balance.

Two other functions with which EDUs have been incorporated, or have inherited, are access and widening participation and student-facing learning development, including, in some cases, services for students with disabilities, including dyslexia. It would appear that as these functions have become more specialised, they have tended to be separated out from general ED and placed in student services.

The arguments in favour of placing an EDU in a Faculty are typically about emphasising its academic role, in contrast to a 'service' conception – particularly in undertaking research, and also teaching Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma and Master's programmes. Many institutions struggle to find a way of ensuring that quality processes relating to these programmes – validation, annual monitoring, external examining – apply to a central unit. The solution is either to place the EDU within an academic structure (sometimes it would seem any Faculty will do) or else the responsibility for the master's-level programmes has to be located outside the EDU.

At the heart of the problem is an uncertainty or ambivalence about whether ED is to be regarded as an academic function, and, therefore, whether ED staff should be on academic contracts. Many EDUs are divided within themselves – between staff who are 'academic' and those who are 'service' staff. Brew has commented on this ambivalence:

In the organization of academic development we see its 'Janus' face. On the one hand is the need to be an academic department, organised like any other. On the other hand, there is a need for independent and a cross-institution view. This is a further tension developers have to live with (Brew 2003: 180).

Given these uncertainties about what EDUs should do and where to place them in the organisation's structure, it is not surprising that different managers take different views about how to resolve these difficulties. However, as we have noted, the uncertainty caused by regular reorganisations of EDUs can be undermining of morale and a major distraction.

The survey data are unclear about what triggers the reorganization of EDUs, but we may speculate about a variety of factors which seem to influence restructuring of the ED function:



- the views of an incoming senior manager (vice chancellor or PVC) who is either predisposed towards or against central units, and how far functions should be 'integrated',
- the commencement, or the ending, of specific funding streams, which can either allow for expansion or demand contraction,
- the extent to which the head of the EDU seeks to achieve amalgamation of function either for personal reasons or in order to meet institutional goals more effectively,
- a change in the head of ED function, either a new appointment or a retirement,
- the mission and organisational culture of the institution (though this can sometimes change rapidly when a new vice chancellor is appointed).

None of these factors is sufficient in itself (with the possible exception of the first), but in combination they can bring about significant swings away from the status quo. However, there is insufficient evidence, and there are too many institutional variables, to argue convincingly that the large amalgamated unit is necessarily better than the smaller more focused unit, though it would appear that a larger unit carries more institutional weight and can encourage better coordination and collaboration.

### **3.2 Distributed educational development**

The survey seems to show that there is increasing use of what Hicks (1999) has called a dispersed model of educational development. This is in recognition that a discipline focus has been found to be more effective with academics than relying only on 'generic' learning and teaching development (Healey and Jenkins 2003; Jenkins 1996). Secondly, there is better acceptance of the value of academic development activity when it is located in the settings in which academics spend most of their time and with which they most closely identify, namely the department (Boud 1999).

Respondents were asked to list staff outside of the EDU who have a specified educational development role. One respondent pointed out that it was difficult to distinguish named roles from the large numbers of individuals and groups that educational developers work with and who all contribute to the development of teaching and learning.

There are a range of network groups/forums/L&T award holders that we have contact with & who we link with; these people wouldn't necessarily have this written into their roles(?). Not sure exactly what you want here. We have lots of people in coordination roles – such as for disability support. Also people like e-learning coaches in Faculties. NB: I found this hard to complete – I honestly don't know (but maybe I should) who has a specified educational development role across university. I think the reality is that there is a range of people who fulfill educational development roles but this is only part of what they do and it might not be specified in their job description (post-1992 university).

This comment points up the extent to which aspects of educational development are part and parcel of many staff's work load – both academic and learning support staff. It might be argued that the more successful an EDU has been, the more other people will

see ED as part of their job. Educational development is by its nature a collaborative activity (Kahn and Baume 2003: 7) and respondents referred to the way they had attempted to work collaboratively across all the institution.

Have tried to develop cooperation with all groups and this seems to be working fairly well – being a small university contact and collaboration is not that much of a problem (pre-1992 university).

Working successfully with key players in University is crucial to success of (unit) meeting its targets (pre-1992 university).

However, the 2006 survey suggests that there is now a more conscious effort to implement various forms of a 'distributed model' of educational development in about half of the EDUs surveyed. Clearly some respondents felt this was the best way forward, 'distributed with networking, trust & collaboration works well in my view' (post-1992 university).

One reason for adopting this approach relates to the importance of subject identity and recognising that academic staff are mostly interested in the issues that impact on their discipline and uses a language which is familiar to them. The arguments for subject-related professional development have been made strongly by a number of influential writers on educational development (Gibbs 1996; Healey and Jenkins 2003; Jenkins 1996; Knight et al. 2006). The success of the Subject Centres has also lent support for this approach. Because a central unit cannot contain within it representatives of all the disciplines, it makes sense to work through a distributed model with local champions who have credibility with their colleagues. But the arguments for a subject-based approach are not all one way (V.-M. D'Andrea and Gosling 2005: 59-63). As the following comment suggests, this model also brings challenges that EDUs have to meet:

I think some interesting times lie ahead in relation to debates surrounding the value of centrally-based educational development versus more local, subject-based development models. There are many colleagues who are assuming educational development roles but do not necessarily see themselves in that capacity – nor would want to. The politics of boundaries, interfaces will become more pronounced I fear. Whilst this territory can be negotiated within institutions due to a willingness of colleagues to work together, good interpersonal relationships etc, I do think there are some massive structural problems emerging which of course have financial implications as well as personal ones for those involved (pre-1992 university).

A difficulty that seems to have been experienced in many institutions is to find enough people who are willing to take on these roles and who have the understanding of what having an educational development role entails. Most staff with a subject background will not have expertise in the literature on pedagogy nor on change management. Also, as this respondent says, the recent CETL initiative has absorbed many of the staff that might have been available to the EDU.

It is difficult to appoint them – I guess there are a number of reasons. One is I don't think there are enough educational developers available to us, because with CETLs and everything else the pool has been well and truly fished I think. Here we have three CETLs or two and a half and there have

been various other initiatives that soak people up. It is a local problem but we only had agreement to fund in July I think and so the real difficulty is getting people cleared for September. But also from our point of view we only want people who are going to be extremely good at development work so we will only take people we think are going to do the job very well (interview respondent 7, post-1992 university).

So, whilst the model was thought to be desirable, the considerable demands that it makes on the central EDU was also noted. Communicating across the distributed network of 'coordinators' or Fellows is a real issue. In those EDUs where there was not a workable way of coordinating the activity of the distributed staff, better coordination was thought to be required if the activities were to be of maximum value to the institution. There was some evidence that without strong support from the centre, the distributed units or individuals are less effective. Where the Teaching Fellows remain relatively isolated, their impact may be limited, and the relationships across the institution can remain quite fragmented, as the following comments suggest:

I would like to develop systematic rather than champion-based links with the departments, so that mainstream academics become involved (pre-1992 university).

It would be preferable not to be so fragmented. I should also like to see Faculty-based responsibility for academic development, to coordinate professional development/probation/mentoring, etc. A closer link with roles of ICT & Learning resources centres would be productive. There is not a strong identity for academic development university-wide, no clear view of our role/location etc. (post-1992 university).

More coordination of effort and strategic direction. Maybe some could be formally assigned to the central unit and put out into local settings. In this way, effort may be more effectively and efficiently prioritised (pre-1992 university).

Greater collaboration, more effective coordination through reporting structures etc. and line manager (pre-1992 university).

One respondent felt that the distributed process relied too much on voluntary cooperation, while another felt that it created too many competing and uncoordinated areas of responsibility:

There is no cash nexus between (unit) and both Teaching Fellows and Learning Enhancement Coordinators. The result is a grace and favour system that relies on personal goodwill and enthusiasm. Understandably the result is patchy (post-1992 university).

There should be some agreement at senior level about the responsibility for this area of work. Responsibility, authority and resources are shared by too many areas. This in itself is not a problem, but there is a certain degree of duplication and insufficient collaboration between units where there are synergies. This is not easy to improve. The situation is made worse because there is no forum or committee where priorities and issues could be discussed and information shared (post-1992 university).

In many EDUs there is a clear strategy to ensure a reasonably coordinated approach across the Faculties and some are happy that this is working:

I think it is reasonably well coordinated, though not necessarily high on everyone's agenda due to competing demands (e.g. teaching, research, income generation) (post-1992 university).

We are trying to put people in touch with each other and provide forums for them to meet and understand each other's projects, as well as share their learning experience across the institution. Institutional funding comes with strings attached that successful bidders report by presenting papers at the Learning and Teaching symposium (pre-1992 university).

An alternative approach to having staff with ED responsibilities in the Faculties is to bring Fellows into the central unit on a secondment basis, as this respondent described:

We had 8 people come in and they worked with us, each of them 1 day a week for 10 weeks, so we bought them out for a term for 1 day a week. So they came and had a desk with us so there were always people on hand to sort out any technical problems or bounce curriculum development ideas off and for me the big benefit was our team kind of got into the lives of a variety of teaching staff which was a bit of an eye-opener (interview respondent 7, post-1992 university).

In conclusion, we can see that the distributed approach has much in its favour, but the staff appointed to be coordinators within their Faculties need to have tailored professional development to ensure that they can acquire the skills they need to be effective, and they also need to be coordinated. This means having good systems of communication and sufficient resources to allow time for coordinators to meet and learn from each other. Too often, distributed schemes are poorly resourced, and little more than a token gesture towards discipline-based ED.

### **3.3 Relationship with senior managers**

A key factor in the operation of EDUs within their institution is the relationship between the Head of the EDU and senior managers. The growing influence of senior management on ED is supported by the finding that 75% of Heads of ED reported directly to a Deputy or Pro Vice Chancellor (see Section 2.2). This suggests that EDUs are increasingly seen as having strategic importance. But as Land (2004: 20) has pointed out, this feature of EDUs can be problematic for some development staff:

There are competing discourses here, and multiple, complex and to some extent fractured identities. Though seemingly identified as a management instrument by the head of the organization this is not the preferred self-image or identity of these particular educational developers.

Though it may not be the preferred self-image of some Heads of ED to be closely aligned with the management of the institution, there are others who do not suffer from this self-doubt and are happy to be aligned with the goals of the management. This partly depends on whether the Head of ED is in agreement with the direction of change, partly on the Head's own preferred management style and personal ambitions, and the extent to which the senior managers themselves see the EDU as having a central role in

achieving the desired change. In this example, the head clearly perceived the manager to be proposing a process that she/he believed was unworkable.

My boss wanted something that was clearly managerial and led to performance management with disciplinary processes for staff who weren't up to scratch and it was quite clear that that would never be implemented and it would stop at the level of learning teaching coordinators in the colleges (Interview respondent 7, post-1992 university).

When EDUs become caught up, against their will, in what is perceived to be a 'managerialist' agenda, this can cause considerable strain on ED staff, their sense of professionalism and identity.

Slowly I began to lose my way as my professional sense of self eroded. I no longer had the requisite control of decisions that affected my practice. There was no time to think, to step back and reflect. As bureaucratisation and managerialism bore down, I sensed with increasing distress an unspoken contract to play a new, but elusive role (MacKenzie et al. 2007: 48).

Playing this 'elusive role' involves finding ways of avoiding the pressures coming from a managerialist culture:

There are pleasures (and dangers) in being a light-footed shape shifter who slips around the cracks of our institution, attempting to survive, resist, evade, and subvert the deathly excesses of the accounting logic of performativity (Grant 2007: 41).

Because some Heads of ED have no desire to become part of the senior management they can keep their distance from it and avoid the role conflicts apparent in the quotes above. Nevertheless they seek influence through personal contacts and by having inputs into the university by a variety of means:

I am not a very competitive type of person and I don't think status matters, I think it is what you are able to do and what you are able to influence. So I guess that would actually be my answer – it is more important that you are known and can have input into things than that you have high status and can't actually do anything (interview respondent 2, pre-1992 university).

On the other hand, some Heads value being very close to the senior managers of their institution and work alongside them to set priorities and are quite happy to talk in terms of performance management.

I guess the jargon is not very popular with a lot of people, but actually it is good having performance management which sets targets which are informed by the institutional strategy and that are relying on individuals' work and when that person doesn't deliver it is not that difficult to move them on, or develop them (interview respondent 7, post-1992 university).

The crucial relationship between Head of ED and her/his line manager is complicated by a variety of personal matters. The PVC or Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) with responsibility for learning and teaching may be perceived by the Head of ED as not being knowledgeable about the field for which he or she has responsibility.

PVCs and DVCs have complicated jobs where they have to balance a large number of priorities, activities and so on, one of which is the enhancement of learning and teaching quality and not all PVCs and DVCs have actually come through a route where they have engaged with the literature in those areas. Many of them will have come through because they have been Deans and Faculty managers – those sorts of things – they have all of those skills, they are not necessarily as up to speed as you would like them to be on what it is that might enhance learning and teaching (interview respondent 4, post-1992 university).

Another barrier to having good conversations between Heads of EDUs and senior managers is that DVCs and PVCs are perceived as misunderstanding what educational development is and are 'turned off' from treating ED seriously:

There is the whole education development versus academic practice debate to be treated carefully if some institutions are not to be turned off by the notion of education development. There is a notion that education development is tree hugging and so on (interview respondent 4: post-1992 university).

But if part of the problem is the perception that the 'true' nature of ED is being misunderstood, there can also be a sense (from the perspective of the Head of ED) that senior managers simply do not understand what needs to be done. One head felt that the progress that he believed had been made, was not being recognised by senior managers:

This [progress] is not necessarily recognised by older members of staff in universities. This is a handicap as they are in senior posts and are generally decision-makers with significant powers of influence (pre-1992 university).

EDUs are expected to be responsive to the 'needs' of students (and staff) but how these needs are understood and how priorities are established are filtered through a variety of lenses, some internal and some external to the institution. An important filter is undoubtedly the senior managers' perception of the institution's priorities. Particularly in those universities with a strong central executive, EDUs must be responsive to those matters which have been identified as strategic priorities. This can mean that the focus of EDUs' work modulates from one year to the next as a result of changes to the senior management and depending on what is thought to be important at any given time.

Quickly changing priorities require EDUs to be 'responsive', but this can put the ED into a defensive position and they can appear to be merely pawns in someone else's game. ED staff certainly need to be 'nimble' if they are to survive.

The event the following week was surrounded by a whole series of other agendas which changed the dynamic completely. But, hey, that's what we academic developers are all about... (Ranald MacDonald, Sheffield Hallam, in e-mail on the SEDA list 23.02.07)

This suggests that EDUs are often having to be reactive to changing circumstances and to changes in the management's priorities rather than being in control of their own activities. But EDUs do try to capture the initiative by being involved in planning and policy development. In other words they try to be 'strategic'. The next section considers how this happens.

### **3.4 Institutional role: Contributing to policies and strategies**

One of the features that distinguishes educational development in the UK from Faculty development in the USA is that most UK centres are involved in what might be called 'organisational development'. In a recent survey dominated by US respondents, only 21.3% said that their centre was 'inclusive of organizational development initiatives' (Chism 2007). Yet in the UK (and in Australia and Canada), educational development defines itself as being more than the development of staff (D'Andrea and Gosling 2005; Kahn and Baume 2003). A recent study of EDUs in Norway and Denmark has argued that ED is being 'transformed from a merely technical activity focusing on how individuals become good teachers, into having a broader focus in which organisations, frameworks and infrastructure surrounding the teaching and learning experience is addressed' (Havnes and Stensaker 2006).

One potential 'organisational development' role that some EDUs have is writing and contributing to institutional policies and strategies. Yet the extent to which EDUs are able to be 'strategic' in this way varies considerably.

Not surprisingly, Heads of ED are most likely to be either the principal author (48%) or contributor (30%) to the Learning and Teaching Strategy. However, that appears to leave about 20% of Heads of EDUS who were neither responsible for, nor did they contribute to, developing and writing the Learning and Teaching Strategy. This suggests that a minority of EDUs are not seen as having a strategic role within their institution. On the other hand, some (16%) were involved in setting the Strategic or Corporate Plan of the university.

There was a cluster of strategies relating to HR policies, which Heads of ED were involved in establishing (42%), including human resources management, staff development, promotion criteria, recognition of excellence in teaching, lecturer development, and initial professional development. Another cluster related to quality assurance or enhancement, including such documents as a Handbook for Validated Provision, Curriculum Framework, Programme Specifications, and Module Evaluation (37%). Two other important areas were e-learning and information strategies (37%), widening participation (21%), and student support and skills development (25%).

There was a wide range of other strategies or policies for which HEDs were responsible or to which they contributed – PDP (16%), employability (14%), plagiarism, peer-mediated reflection on teaching, and peer observation of teaching. Interestingly, only two said they contributed to the estates strategy, and only three to the research strategy.

Table 7

Policy/strategy	Responsible	Contributed to	Total
T & L strategy	21	13	34
e-learning strategy	5	6	11
Employability, student skills	6	5	11
Quality assurance, handbook for validated provision, APEL, programme specification, professional doctorates	4	5	9
Widening participation, access	3	6	9
Strategic plan (relating to T & L)	1	7	8
Promotion criteria, recognition of excellence, rewarding staff in T & L, teaching fellowships	2	5	7
Human resources management	2	6	7
PDP	5	1	6
Information strategy, information systems	1	4	5
Quality enhancement	2	3	5
Staff development; lecturer development; initial professional development	4		4
Professional standards in teaching, CPD	3	1	4
Disability, equalities, race	1	2	3
Plagiarism	1	2	3
Learner support	1	2	3
Research	1	2	3
Partnership	1	1	2
International collaboration		2	2
Curriculum framework	1	1	2
Estates		2	2
Peer-mediated reflection on teaching, peer observation of teaching (POT)	1	1	2
Academic restructuring	1		1
Education strategy	1		1
Module evaluation	1		1
Academic conduct		1	1



Given this huge potential range of activity, the question of how the agenda for ED is arrived at becomes a matter of interest. In some cases, it appears to be quite ad hoc depending on what are 'hot issues'.

Sometimes it would be a national initiative that would spur something. Very often, such as using computers in exams, it's something that will, as it were, arise from the ground floor and come to attention as something that requires addressing – other than as a sort of local departmental sort of level. I guess occasionally from suggestions that we have about things, although those will tend to be suggestions that we will have made in another sort of committee or open forum (interview respondent 2, pre-1992 university).

In other cases, it will be determined by the major priorities identified in the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

We have got 5 categories in our strategy which are: improving student experience, improving teaching and research links, improving internationalisation in the University in a broad sense – staff and students, improving pedagogic research and have staff development that supports all of those and do it all in an evaluative framework (interview respondent 7, post-1992 university).

In this example, the EDU's strategic priorities have been clearly defined and this influenced the way in which the ED's resources, not least of which is staff time, were allocated.

A major influence on priorities come from external drivers (discussed in Section 5.1 below). When respondents were asked to rank the general factors that had the most impact on strategic priorities for their unit, the 'scholarship of teaching and learning' and 'online' or 'e-learning' appear to be the most significant.

Table 8. Impact on ED work

	Highest impact	Middling	Lowest impact
Scholarship of teaching and learning	23	7	3
Online learning/e-learning	22	9	1
Rewarding teaching excellence	19	7	8
Virtual learning environments/managed learning environment	18	12	2
Research Assessment Exercise	14	2	18
Continuing Professional Development	13	15	9
National Standards for Teaching and Supporting Learning	10	12	9

### **3.5 Evaluation of polices and strategies**

When asked about the evaluation of strategies there was a mixed response, some claiming to evaluate 'pretty much everything', while others saying that it was more a matter of monitoring targets than full evaluation.

Learning and Teaching Strategy – have to monitor our own sections/tasks & report on them - but not evaluated as such (pre-1992 university).

Not in evaluating the strategies – other than working through the achievement (or otherwise) of action plan targets (pre-1992 university).

Although some have commissioned external evaluations of their Learning and Teaching Strategy, the overall impression is that strategies are monitored, but there appears to be little systematic investigation of the impact of strategies. This is perhaps because the task would be too onerous, particularly when learning and teaching strategies are very broad and cover many aspects of an institution's provision. Nevertheless, the lack of systematic evaluation of the impact of ED activities may be regarded as a weakness.

### **3.6 Perceptions of the institutional environment**

The survey asked respondents whether they perceived their institutional environment to be more or less favourable to ED compared with five years ago. Not surprisingly, there is wide variation in the experience of individual heads of EDUs. At the worst, there are units which are 'in meltdown' (post-1992 university), 'no guarantee office will continue in current format' (pre-1992 university), and 'at this point in time educational development is being pushed down the agenda' (post-1992 university).

By way of contrast, some feel that their institutional situation is now more secure, as these comments illustrate: 'Introduction of Learning and Teaching strategy and development of ICT has increased acceptability of need for educational development', 'better links between strategy, strategic committees and EDU', 'feel that educational development has been mainstreamed in the uni' (all from post-1992 universities).

The overall mood of many respondents is mixed, with both positive and negative views of their current situation:

Invariably it is one step forward, one step back – successes on take up of VLE, introducing CPD programme and improving completion rates on initial certificate, but academic staff workloads keep increasing and pushing educational development down the list of priorities for most (post-1992 university).

Overall, the Unit and its remit are much more 'safe' than they were five years ago. Regrettably, achieving that has meant many compromises, which have made us more 'main stream', which at (institution) means 'centralised'. In that sense, we are further from practical academic acceptance than we were before (pre-1992 university).

(moderately more favourable) Although I say this very cautiously, as there are many misunderstandings about the remit of educational development and a tension between the need to carry out research in this area and the need to provide support (pre-1992 university).

Answering on my 4.5 year timeframe, I would say that it is becoming more favourable, but that this is a recent (in the last year if I really think about it) phenomenon. The rest of the time has been neutral or actively "anti" anything that sounds vaguely educational-ese (post-1992).

The institutional environment is viewed as being more favourable than five years ago by the majority of respondents. Thirty-five per cent thought their institutional environment was considerably more favourable to ED, and 38% thought it was moderately more favourable. However, 11% thought it was the same, and 16%, that's about 1 in 6 respondents, thought it was worse.

## **4. Relationship with academic staff and students**

EDUs are shaped by, and need to be responsive to, a variety of different groups with which EDUs have different and sometimes complex relationships. The key groups that will be considered in this section are teaching staff and students.

### **4.1 Relationship with academic staff – teaching and research**

EDUs' relationship with academic staff is complex and multi-layered. On the one hand, it could be said that everything that EDUs do is designed to benefit staff in the sense that it will help them become more competent and confident in their professional lives. In most cases, this is understood principally in relation to one aspect of their job, namely as teachers (though some EDUs interpret their role more widely to incorporate research activity). By prioritising teaching, ED staff find themselves – perhaps unwittingly – caught up in one of the inherent tensions of the life of an academic – namely between teaching and research. Although EDUs see themselves as advocates of staff, working on their behalf and 'supporting' them, by campaigning clearly on the side of enhancing teaching, EDUs are perceived as acting against the interests of those academics who value their role as researchers above that of being teachers. Given the well-documented dominance of the research culture in many universities (Trowler 2004; Young 2006), the association of EDUs with the teaching agenda immediately puts them into a defensive position and potentially in an antagonistic relationship against powerful interests within their institution. EDUs are, therefore, forced to look for 'allies' for the cause – those staff who welcome the enhancement of their status as teachers, who wish to apply for development grants, and who put themselves forward for teaching awards.

Some EDUs have resisted this dichotomy as an unnecessary simplification. Two strategies appear to be available. The first, typically taken in the old universities, is to accept the importance of research in the lives of academics and to work within the remaining, admittedly limited, space occupied by teaching. This is a pragmatic but realistic approach. It does not assume that because staff do not have the time for teaching development, this is because they have no professional interest in teaching – as this interview respondent explains.

I think our experience is that the vast majority of academic staff are interested in teaching and learning, it is a question of finding the time to actually be able to develop that interest as fully as they would like and most people, given all the pressures that are upon them, especially obviously from the research end, give an awful lot of time and thought to their teaching, but they are aware that there are many other things they have to be doing. I think it is not so much – obviously there are a minority of people who it is difficult to interest – there probably are in many institutions, but I think it is not so much difficulty in interesting people but the difficulty in engaging with people in a way in which they have time, or in a way in which they can find the time to actually pursue their interests (interview respondent 2, pre-1992 university).

The second strategy is to incorporate the development of research capacity within the understanding of 'academic development', that is, to deny the presupposition that EDUs are principally about teaching and learning, but rather they are about all aspects of the

academic role, including the research role. One respondent spoke of taking the opportunity

to look at development as academic development so that, that is why we have changed the PG Cert and the Master's award, so that they are not just about teaching and learning, they are about the full range of academic activity, but we are coming at it from a very definitely academic base (interview respondent 1, post-1992 university).

Recently, there has been a rather different strategy that has gained in popularity, namely to argue that the relationship between teaching and research is not a dichotomous one, but rather that they are intimately connected with each other (Jenkins et al. 2003). Universities, and recently HEFCE, have seized on the idea of 'research-led teaching' and 'research-informed teaching' as a way of escaping the dialectical antinomies of teaching and research, by emphasising the symbiotic relationship of the two activities. This strategy has the clear advantage that it avoids demonising the impact of research on teaching and seeks to attract to the lower status of teaching some of the positive connotations of the more powerful research interests.

We have also seen an attempt by HEFCE to 'achieve esteem for teaching excellence that is at least comparable with that accorded to research' (senior HEFCE officer), by offering relatively generous funding to develop teaching through the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. It appears that part of the motive for the CETL initiative was to achieve a degree of democratisation (Skelton 2005) of higher education in England, by offering significant additional funding to institutions that are normally regarded as lower status 'teaching institutions' for excellence in teaching, as well as the accolade of the title 'Centre for Excellence' (Gosling and Hannan 2007b). Heads of ED showed themselves to have mixed responses to the CETLs. Many expressed their opposition to the competitive bidding process as being divisive (Gosling and Hannan 2007a), but in the 2006 survey most preferred to 'wait and see' before passing judgement on whether the initiative will achieve the benefits its originators hoped for. However, the CETL strategy is unlikely to disturb the entrenched reputational hierarchy of higher education institutions, and, furthermore, it could be argued that it also tends to perpetuate the teaching/research divide, whilst providing some considerable compensations to those who opt to focus on the development of teaching and learning.

Another response by EDUs is to raise their own status and 'credibility' in the eyes of academics by undertaking research of their own. The surveys since 1995 suggest that there has been a growing 'academicisation' of educational development. This is in response to claims that one reason for the perceived relative failure of EDUs to transform institutions is due to 'tacit and poorly thought-out and differing theories of change' (Knight et al. 2006; Trowler et al. 2005: 432). It has been argued that 'academic development' has suffered from being 'atheoretical' (Rowland 2003: 15), being based on a narrow range of inadequate theories (Haggis 2003: 89; Lindsay 2004). While according to another critique, the teaching and learning literature suffers from two faults: first, a 'narrow and technicist conception of pedagogy' and, second, 'the dominance of particular psychological models of pedagogy' (Malcolm and Zukas 2001: 37).

The 2006 survey showed that the promotion of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning now features strongly as a key role of EDUs. 72.5% of EDUs now saw undertaking or

contributing to pedagogic research as part of their function and 67.5% saw their role as sponsoring research into teaching and learning. The motivation for this shift in the direction of research-type activities may be, as some have claimed, to improve student learning (Shulman 1999; Trigwell and Shale 2004), though the links between undertaking pedagogical research and improving teaching may be quite indirect (Gosling 2006). However, it appears that this shift in the direction of research activity has much to do with a conception of educational development as essentially an academic activity that places EDUs alongside academic departments and not in a 'service' role. And yet ED staff are not always well positioned to take up this more academic role.

Scholarly work in the field of higher education studies has been affected by the fact that many of its specialists are located in development units, many of which are viewed, particularly by institutional managers, as service units and not as academic departments and where many staff are not even on academic contracts and neither funded for, nor expected to do, research (Brew 2003: 169).

Despite this difficulty, many EDUs have significantly increased their involvement in research. The underlying messages are that teaching in higher education is not in opposition to research, but is itself a topic for legitimate research, and that it also brings benefits to student learning. It is also clear that some educational developers have seen their own involvement in research as being critical to their credibility with academics, tacitly accepting the premise that research activity is central to academic identity.

However, whether it was the RAE that was responsible for the divorce of research and teaching, as some have suggested (McNay 1999), or an historically more deep-rooted division, it seems unlikely that any of these moves will achieve a complete reconciliation between these two warring partners, not least because the conflicting realities of academic life – pressures on academics' time, multiple identities, and unequal status and funding – continue to resist all attempts at their eradication.

#### **4.2 The 'development' of staff**

A number of people have discussed the term 'development' as a normative, value-laden and contested term (D'Andrea and Gosling 2005; Land 2004; Webb 1996). One of the features of the 'development' discourse is that it can appear to claim for itself the 'moral high ground'. To some extent, this is inherent in the term 'development' since, in contrast to the more neutral term 'change', it implies that the goal towards which the change is progressing is necessarily desirable. It has been argued that the language used by educational development can reinforce the sense of being positively value-laden and goal-orientated by adopting 'the type of progressivist, linear, liberal ideology common in colonial discourses' (Manathunga 2006: 20).

EDUs' commitment to 'development' in this sense can place them in an ambivalent relationship with academic staff. On the one hand, ED professionals are predominantly recruited from the ranks of academic staff (though not all) and retain a loyalty to the central values of the academic role. On the other hand, they can appear to be placed in a 'meta-academic' position where they are leading change, with priorities that may be quite different from those of the academics who they are seeking to influence or educate. In this context, academics can become the 'Other' who can be characterised in

terms of 'champions' or 'allies' (if their interests and values align with those of the EDU), or as 'resisters' or even 'dinosaurs' (if they have opposing interests and values).

Yet uncertainty about the basis on which EDUs claim their position as 'developers' leads to much self-doubt and concern about 'credibility'.

'behind the triumphant liberal chant of teaching and learning 'progress' preached by educational developers lurks a profound sense of defensiveness – a fear of our Other – the disciplinary-based academic' (Manathunga 2006: 21).

Staff who are recruited to the Academy's Subject Centres and the CETLs often begin by resisting the label of 'developers', precisely because they are uncomfortable with that role. Staff who make the transition from an academic role to being a development professional are also uncomfortable with this title (Manathunga 2006). Yet by virtue of the goals that are set for these created 'units' (EDUs, Subject Centres, CETLs) goals, which the majority of academics never asked for and commonly do not see the need for, the staff in these units begin to perceive academics who happen to have other priorities as needing to be 'brought on board'. The nature of the transaction between developers and their 'clients' is brought home by the language used. When 'developers' succeed in persuading staff to adopt the ED's goals as their own, the ultimate badge of success is that the staff 'take ownership' of these goals and the associated activities.

Because EDUs are charged with achieving development (or change), they can appear to be the Pollyannas of higher education, always trying to persuade others of the benefits of achieving whatever is the latest target for improvement (PDP, diversifying assessment, reducing plagiarism, etc). A tension necessarily is created by asking to staff to focus on development when the realities of their daily life suggest that, rather than improving, higher education is in decline. All the good work of an EDU in raising the morale of staff in favour of teaching can be lost when an institution is plunged into conflict over working hours, conditions of employment and pay, or there is a sense that the management is forcing through an agenda without consideration of the views of academics or students. It is not surprising, then, that the 'development agenda' can be perceived (even if this is a caricature) as doing the work of management and as just 'one more thing to do' in an already over-crowded professional life.

EDUs have to work hard to ensure that they work alongside academic staff, and learning support staff, in a way which is based on conversation and dialogue, and not on the assumption that ED professionals are always right.

I am quite wary of the idea that we hold the secret to good learning and teaching and they come to us to be enlightened and then go back better people. That makes me really uncomfortable. Of course we have to do some of that. The idea is that it is about the conversation where we listen to them – I guess that is the key thing for me (interview respondent 7, post-1992 university).

### **4.3 The scope of 'development'**

A second, and related, point about the term 'development' is that it leaves open what it is that will be 'developed'. This is one reason why there is considerable variation in the way in which the remit of EDUs is interpreted. The survey demonstrated that, once we

move beyond the predictable common interest in the Learning and Teaching Strategy, the list of policies for which Heads have been responsible or have contributed to is long and extremely varied (as Table 7 illustrates). Almost any aspect of HE life is potentially a candidate for 'development'. Perhaps it is because the concept of development is not clearly limited that some Heads of ED believe that others misunderstand what ED is really about.

'There are many misunderstandings about the remit of educational development and a tension between the need to carry out research in this area and the need to provide support' (pre-1992 university).

Martensson and Roxa went so far as to say that in the Swedish context,

'individual practitioners seem to understand the practice of educational development in such a multifaceted way that they do not understand each other – there exists no community of practice' (2005: 2).

Rowland pointed out that there was no overlap in the discourse between two types of educational literature represented by Entwistle and Barnett (Rowland 2003: 17). Land (2004) showed that there were radical differences in approaches to educational development based on different theoretical understandings, which in the words of one of his respondents has led to a 'crisis of confidence' (p. 197).

It may be that the problem is not only that different theoretical positions are being taken up, but that ED is an under-theorised activity. EDUs are making decisions about the scope of 'development' based on pragmatic considerations within a very context-dependent framework, determined by what is possible within their particular circumstances, including key factors such as the size and culture/mission of the institution, the level of priority given to teaching, and the size and capacity of the EDU. A recent study found that,

'The process of decision making is largely unconscious, unexplored and untheorised. The resources upon which they drew most were an understanding of the context for staff and educational development in a university, knowledge of people in the organisation and an understanding of organisational behaviour. This seems to suggest a highly situated, context-related form of expertise where a role-holder behaves in a way that seems to fit the context, rather than the conscious application of generalisable problem-solving approaches' (Blackmore and Wilson 2005: 114).

Given that the response of leaders is largely based on tacit knowledge, rather than explicit theorised knowledge, it is likely that each person's own experience and professional background will be influential in the formation of his/her approach to educational development. This would go some way to explaining the diversity that is to be found.

#### **4.4 Relationship with students**

As Sorcinelli et al suggest (2006), the most important goal of ED activity is considered to be 'the common cause of improving the education that students' receive'. 'Improving student learning' is often cited as a goal of EDUs and is perhaps the overriding goal of ED, and yet the influence of EDUs on student learning can only be indirect, especially



since the majority of units do not provide direct services to students. The benefits to students of ED activities has to be mediated through the professional development of academic and learning support staff, and, partly as a consequence, it is often difficult to evaluate the ultimate impact on improved student learning of any strategy adopted by EDUs. In terms of students' influence on ED centres, the increasing numbers of students on part-time and distance learning courses and a substantial proportion following programmes in Further Education Colleges, means that students' influence on EDUs tends to be indirect and in political terms relatively weak.

Some EDUs do provide student services. The most common service provided is training for the use of ICT, followed by the provision of study skills, English language, and numeracy support. A few EDUs have responsibility for provision of support for students with disabilities, though many more contribute to development of guidelines for teaching designed to create equal opportunities for students with special needs. Interestingly, where EDUs have direct contact with students they report that this helps to inform their work in staff development. However, despite the arguments for combining student-facing work and staff-facing work in one unit (D'Andrea and Gosling 2001), this appears to be the exception rather than the rule.

In the majority of ED activities the students are believed to be the ultimate beneficiaries of the work being undertaken with both academic and learning support staff. For example, the considerable investment in EDUs providing initial professional development programmes over the last decade is justified by the supposed benefits to students, although it is hoped that staff will benefit too (Rust 2000). Workshop programmes, support for changes to curriculum design and to assessment methods are all believed to benefit students. For example, a major argument in favour of outcome-based course design (using learning outcomes) is that it improves students' learning by making the goal of the learning more 'transparent', though it has been shown that this depends on students (and staff) sharing an understanding of the learning outcomes (Price 2005).

However, the link between the professional development of staff and improved student learning is indirect and in some cases unproven. For example, the recent popularity of scholarship of teaching and encouraging pedagogical research may be more to do with building academic credibility for ED than because it clearly improves the education of students, though there are arguments that it does in the long term benefit students (Gosling 2006; Shulman 1999). Another example of the uncertain impact of development activity on students is Peer Observation of Teaching. There is little evidence that Peer Observation schemes have led to improved students' learning, though it may have happened. There is evidence that teachers believe it has helped them to improve their teaching (Keig and Waggoner 1994), although there is a concern that teachers may make only 'surface' changes to their practice (Kinchin 2005).

An important way in which EDUs impact on students is through their involvement in writing various strategies, policies and guidelines. For example, policies on plagiarism, assessment methods, anonymous marking and PDP have often derived from working groups convened by EDUs. The policies for which EDUs have been responsible or on which they have collaborated with departments (see Table 7) indicates that there is a wide range of ways that students' experience of their universities is influenced by the EDU.

One area where EDUs have direct contact with students is through the provision of some kind of training course for postgraduates who teach (or Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) to use the American term). Preparation of postgraduates for teaching has become the norm over the last ten years, though the extent of this preparation varies in length and its standing. There has been increasing recognition that research students cannot be expected to step into a teaching role without some support.

In the 2006 survey, about 75% of respondents said that they took full or shared responsibility for providing this. In a subsequent survey (September 2007), 23 out of the 26 respondents (88%) said that they were fully or partly responsible for this provision. 50% said that they shared this responsibility, 6 with departments (43%), 3 with Faculties (22%), and 3 with the research office (22%).

36% provided a certificated course, while the remainder offered workshops or an uncertificated course. Overwhelmingly, this was provided annually. 44% of the courses were compulsory for postgraduates who teach, while another 40% said that students were 'encouraged' to attend. For 16% it was entirely voluntary.

The length of the course varied considerably. 8 were more than 20 hours (of which 4 were more than 30 hours), 9 were between 11 and 20 hours and 8 were ten hours or less. These findings suggest that there is recognition that postgraduates who have some teaching responsibilities need to receive training, and that most institutions now provide this. Nevertheless, it is not always compulsory for postgraduates to attend, which means that students may be being taught by untrained students. On the other hand, there are some concerns about any training for teaching taking up time that the postgraduates could be using for their research.

Would prefer that attendance at teaching and learning courses be a bit more thorough, accredited and supported by both the institution and supervisors, but there is the tension between this and the need to complete as quickly as possible (respondent, 2007 survey).

EDUs were much less likely to be involved in courses aimed at improving postgraduates' research skills, though 28% had some responsibility for this provision. This type of provision was mostly likely to be the responsibility of academic departments, or, alternatively, of the research office or Graduate School. It has also been argued that departments have a responsibility to prepare their research students to be future academics.

Those 'becoming' academics, more than those already within the academy, will in their careers be facing changing expectations in a shifting context, and need to learn how to best respond as well as contribute to these changes. Yet, recent research suggests that doctoral students and new academics hold incomplete understandings of academic life (Website of Oxford Centre for Excellence in Preparing for Academic Practice)

There has been increasing interest in postgraduate education, especially as a result of the Roberts Report, which claimed that postgraduates were receiving inadequate training in transferable skills (Roberts paragraph 0.40). 44% of 25 respondents said that were 'partly responsible' for supporting the development of postgraduates' writing skills, and 37% for 'preparing postgraduates to be future academics'. However, it would

appear that most EDUs have not been strongly involved in the use of the 'Roberts money' to improve postgraduates' generic and employability skills.

The comments of respondents in the 2007 online survey suggest that provision for postgraduates has grown in an ad hoc and piecemeal way and there is a growing perception of the need for 'more rationalisation of the provision' and better certification. Many felt that lack of resources prevented them expanding their provision in this direction, while others saw their role as not being 'student-facing'. As one said, 'We are not resourced to do anything else for pgs, we are fully occupied with staff'. Funding for postgraduate provision was often 'short-term', creating a problem of sustaining it when the source of funding ends.

The relationship between EDUs and students has two sides. The work of EDUs has an impact on students as we have seen, but students also influence EDUs. A significant and growing influence on ED activity are student evaluations of teaching. There is evidence that poor results in the NSS are attracting the attention of senior managers. One Vice Chancellor, for example, has demanded that departments should 'systematically address' 'ratings that remain disappointing'. Such demands from senior managers for departments to make changes to improve student satisfaction provides a reason for them to seek the support of the EDU.

Student satisfaction is taken seriously. Staff are busier than ever and find it difficult to engage with staff development activities. However, the availability of support for [EDU] staff at Faculty and Departmental level has made a difference to the pace of change (post-1992 university).

The NSS has fulfilled a useful role in identifying the key areas where student satisfaction is low, in particular the issue of providing feedback to students on their assessed work (SurrIDGE 2006: 8). Some Heads welcomed the way in which the NSS was giving them a clear lead about what needed to be 'sorted'.

I think it (NSS) is just a huge shock. A bit of it was what our students were telling us, and you can't get away from the fact that what everybody was telling us – they told us twice in exactly the same way... They said very specific things about course organisation and course communication, if you look at our structure that is what you predict and you can sort those (interview respondent 7, post-1992 university).

Internal quality processes which normally incorporate student feedback on the course or department under review also work as a catalyst for involving ED professionals (whether centrally or Faculty-based) in a problem-solving role. Some EDUs undertake to gather student feedback on programmes of study by the use of focus groups, and some are responsible for gathering institution-wide data through course questionnaires.

However, EDUs are nervous about becoming engaged in what might be seen as 'remedial work' with either individual teachers or whole departments who have received poor student feedback. This reluctance points to a central dilemma for ED professionals who, on the one hand, wish to resist becoming part of the perceived increase in surveillance of academic staff and want 'to survive, resist, evade, and subvert the deathly excesses of the accounting logic of performativity' (Grant 2007a: 41). But, on the other hand, they are part of the institutional infrastructure explicitly committed to

improving teaching. To refuse to work with 'under-performing' staff might be seen as betraying the very students whose quality of education is at risk.

Students can be brought into a more direct role in informing EDUs in a variety of ways, including involvement in staff-led development projects, student-led projects, and in various kinds of learning communities (D'Andrea and Gosling 2005: 46-53). The purpose of these groupings of staff and students is to bring people together from across the institution to engage in discussion about issues of immediate concern and to inform decision-making. 'Meta-learning communities' take on many forms, they might be ad hoc groups established to review university strategies, they might be a university-wide curriculum initiative, or a review of existing practices that impact on student experiences. Student opinion can also be consulted through surveys (often online), for example, on the use of the VLE, their experience of personal tutorials, and PDP. Research projects and learning development projects sponsored by EDUs often involve students, and they are sometimes recruited as co-researchers. Much scholarship of teaching therefore brings students into the orbit of the EDU and staff associated with its work in departments.

Students are being actively drawn into the work of CETLs, and a national network of students has been formed to promote student participation in the work of the CETLs. The Reinvention Centre is particularly focused on increasing the participation of students as co-researchers:

Students can come to us and get money, £1,500, to do an interesting piece of work that is either inside or outside, and we try and involve students in our meetings and in our committees and all our processes that we have so that we have as much student input as possible. We don't do anything without the students being involved (interview with Director, 2006).

(<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/CETLstudentnet.htm>)

Virtually all universities and colleges have ways in which students are represented at course, department and Faculty level. Some EDUs are involved in enabling students to become better representatives by carrying out training and providing guidelines. Such training is usually offered in association with the Students' Union.

The retention of students, where this is perceived to be a problem, can also be another powerful influence on ED activity. Widening participation, properly understood, is not simply a matter of attracting new types of students, it also requires reconsideration of the curriculum, course design, assessment, modes of delivery and learning support (Archer et al. 2003; Thomas 2001). The market-driven nature of higher education means that in many institutions EDUs are being required to address the issue of improving student retention.

## 5. National environment for educational development

Given the potential range of ED it is perhaps not surprising that external, national-level, influences exert some constraining forces on what EDUs actually do. We will now consider the influence of external forces on EDUs.

### 5.1 Externally driven agendas

With some justification, it could be argued that EDUs are more exposed to external agencies than most university departments. The principal fact contributing to this 'exposure' is the expectation that EDUs will respond to national policy with respect to teaching quality enhancement, an aspect of HE policy which has been given increasing importance over the last ten years.

In England, TQEF funding linked to Learning and Teaching Strategies has been critical to many EDUs. TQEF funding has been linked to national policy priorities, for example, in the funding arrangements for 2002-2005 (HEFCE 2002: para 15). Areas of national priority were identified:

- Widening participation
- Ensuring fair access to HE
- Maintaining and improving retention rates
- Enhancing the employability of graduates
- Encouraging and disseminating innovative practices

Institutions were 'encouraged' to 'address these areas of national priority' (*ibid*, para 60) alongside the promotion of equality of opportunity, race equality, meeting the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA), and ensuring students were not disadvantaged for their religious beliefs or their sexual orientation.

The most recent phase of TQEF funding has required specific attention to 'research-led teaching'.

The Quality Assurance Agency is the second most important external agency (after the funding councils) in its influence on ED. In Scotland, the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR), whilst not directly linked to funding, has had a major impact on ED activity. The identified ELIR 'themes', such as assessment and the first-year student experience have required institutions (often through their EDUs) to respond in specific policy areas. In England, Subject Review and institutional audit have had a considerable impact, including on two very significant activities, the development of Peer Observation of Teaching schemes and the introduction of PDP. The Codes of Practice, and the so-called academic infrastructure, including the National Qualification Framework, Programme Specifications, and subject benchmark statements, have been influential in establishing the overwhelming dominance of an outcomes-based view of course design throughout the sector.

There have been a plethora of competitive funding initiatives (particularly in England) to which EDUs have often been expected to take an institutional lead; these include FDTL (in five phases), NTFS, and CETLs. The process of competitive bidding has often

required Heads of ED to devote a large proportion of their time pursuing recognition for their institution. The NTFS has been burdensome in this respect because of its annual nature and uncertain rewards, while the one-off CETL bidding process was the most burdensome of all (Gosling and Hannan 2007a). Other initiatives in which some EDUs have also been involved included Rewarding and Developing Staff, Widening Participation, and the Higher Education Innovation Fund (three rounds).

A key recommendation of the Dearing Report – to establish accredited professional development programmes for all staff new to higher education – has required a response by EDUs, and in the majority of institutions, implementation of this recommendation has been given to EDUs.

The Institute for learning and Teaching (ILT) (from 1999 to 2004) also made demands on EDUs. As the institutional Learning and Teaching Strategies of 2002 testify, many EDUs devoted considerable effort and a proportion of their funding on membership drives on the mistaken assumption that it was going to be important to maximise ILT membership.

Subsequently, the HEA has, through consultations, (on, for example, the Professional Standards Framework), requests for 'expressions of interest', and bidding for research funding, made demands on EDUs. The Academy has attempted to influence policy through the adoption of themes:

- The student learning experience
- Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment
- The research and teaching nexus
- Employer engagement

For the institutions that were previously known as Colleges of Higher Education, and the constituent colleges of the University of Wales, the biggest external influence has been meeting the requirements of the QAA to achieve 'degree awarding powers'. While for those EDUs with a strong interest in developing ICT systems and software, JISC [7] has been an important funding source and influence through their bidding processes and development grants.

## **5.2 Perceptions of the national environment**

In the final section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to give their overall estimation of whether, compared with five years ago, the national higher education environment is more or less favourable towards educational development and its goals?

The overall finding is that most are cautiously optimistic that the climate is more favourable now than five years ago. 25% considered that the national environment is considerably more favourable, and a further 54% that it is 'moderately more favourable'. 13% thought it was about the same and only 5% thought it was less favourable.

The comments indicate that the biggest concerns have been over the perceived failure of the HEA to engage seriously with EDUs and individual academics (former ILT members). Typical comments are as follows:

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<sup>7</sup> Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)

I believe that the move from the [Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education] ILTHE to Academy has helped to downplay the importance of educational development. We are moving away from enthusiasm for innovating and enhancing academic practice, to an emphasis on research of academic practice. We ought to have combined those two, to really move HE onwards (pre-1992 university).

The national climate has suffered considerably over the last couple of years. The ILTHE had several faults, but did create a framework in which most institutions were able to accredit teaching certificates. The HEA has, however, taken several steps that have had a positively retrograde impact, including delay, seeming endless policy change, failure to demonstrate understanding of what is going on in institutions etc. This has lost credibility for educational development and the original impetus created post-Dearing has been considerably lost (pre-1992 university).

Against these pessimistic comments must be placed those who consider that better resourcing for, and the mainstreaming of, educational development, particularly through TQEF in England and ELIR in Scotland, has been very beneficial. However, optimistic comments are often quickly qualified by 'threats'.

TQEF: It has become more embedded. There are few Universities without a clear agenda for L&T. At the same time, the RAE dampens things a bit... (pre-1992 university).

Developments in the resourcing for academic staff development have made a significant difference to our ability to support change (TQEF and Support for Professional Standards). The HE Academy and the White Paper commitments have supported the introduction of a mandatory [Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education] PGCLT(HE) for new staff. Quality expectations and monitoring also support an agenda for change (post-1992 university).

I would have said considerably more (favourable) due to ELIR in Scotland. But I'm sufficiently worried about the HE Academy's direction to see that as a threat rather than an opportunity. RAE 2008 is also an important threat (post-1992 university).

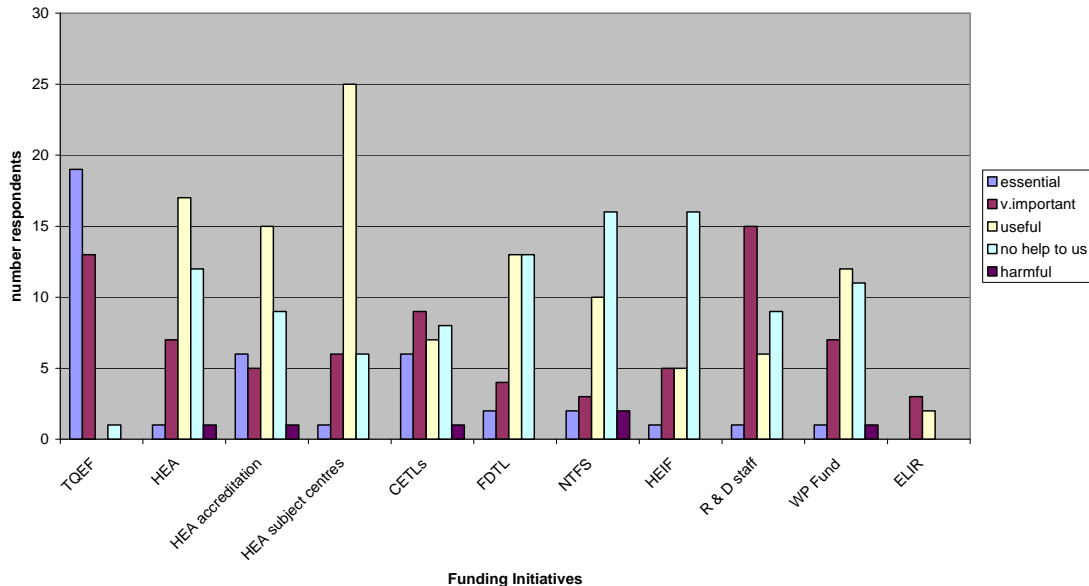
Echoing the debate about distributing educational development away from central units is this comment:

I am not sure that generic units are as flavour of the month as they were five years ago, when they were being set up everywhere. With HEA, subject centres, NTFS, CETL, NSS and other initiatives the goals of educational development are high on the agenda – including QAA's shift to enhancement in place of assurance – it might be said to have been 'mainstreamed' (College of HE).

When respondents were asked specifically about the impact of the major funding council initiatives, a complex picture emerged. TQEF was clearly rated as most significant – 18 out of the 35 English EDUs rated it as 'essential' and a further 13 as very important. On the other hand, the HEA (general activity), HEA accreditation and Subject Centres were

all more likely to be rated as 'useful' than anything more enthusiastic. Three out of the six Scottish EDUs rated ELIR as very important, but for two others it was merely useful.

Chart 8 Impact of Funding Initiatives



CETLs had a very mixed reception. Perhaps, not surprisingly, as a competitive and selective initiative, six rated CETLs as 'essential' whereas for eight EDUs they were 'no help to me'. FDTL had a surprisingly negative response with 13 thinking that it was merely 'useful', and an equal number thinking it was 'no use to me'. And the initiative that is least popular is NTFS, with 16 rating it as 'no use to me'. Perhaps it is some comfort that only two people thought any of the initiatives were actually 'harmful' to their EDU.

EDUs accept that an important part of their role is to conduct 'environmental scanning' and to act as a mediator between national agencies and individual institutions. Some heads see the opportunities offered by external initiatives as an important way in which they are able to have strategic impact and be of value to their managers. It may be this aspect of EDUs' work, supporting their institution's response to these external demands, which will ensure the continuation of the unit, even if TQEF funding were to end:

There are more and more initiatives that require people with the kind of expertise that education developers have in order to realise them. I mean institutions – not to say that institutions will make bad institutional decisions – but I think they will then find that they have cut themselves out of certain routes to funding and prestige and I think that if you do bring initiatives for funding opportunities together you do actually have the wherewithal to have a strategic impact on your institution (interview respondent 7, post-1992 university).

The sheer extent of the external influences of national agencies, and the demands they make, might, however, seem to suggest that individual Heads of Educational Development in the UK have been so busy responding to national initiatives and



requirements that they have had very little room within which they can set their own priorities. There are two problems with this situation. The first is that sometimes these external pressures become overwhelming and displace other legitimate and potentially useful ED activity.

Secondly, as Skelton (2005), in his discussion of the impact of awards for excellence, has commented, there can be an alienating effect on individuals who have to comply with externally driven processes with which they are in fundamental disagreement. The 2006 survey suggests there is evidence of this 'dislocation', or what has been called 'values schizophrenia' (Ball 2003), among heads of ED in respect of several aspects of this externally driven agenda, particularly the NTFS and CETLs, and more recently in respect of the Academy. One successful CETL bid-writer and Head of ED, when asked about her personal view of CETLs, said:

Waste of money and rubbish. My last year has been entirely ruined by something that I don't believe in (Gosling and Hannan 2007a: 638).

However, it would be wrong to exaggerate this sense of 'value schizophrenia', since many Heads are comfortable with the fit between national and local priorities, and they welcome the growing pressure to take teaching seriously, which has come from a national level. Policy priorities such as rewarding staff, widening participation, equality of opportunity, and developing students' employability skills are ones with which most Heads of ED feel comfortable. For this reason, the distinction between external and internal agendas is not always easy to draw. It is interesting to note that ideas which have been generated from within the educational development community, such as the scholarship of teaching and learning, have been adopted by policy makers.

One area where there appeared to be significant concern at the time of the survey (in 2006) was the role of the HEA. It was the view of many Heads of ED that the Academy had not done enough to involve them, their natural allies, in its activities. There is some evidence that the Academy may be changing its attitude towards educational development, but for several respondents this may be a case of 'too little too late'.

A major difficulty for EDUs continues to be the tensions between apparently contradictory external policy priorities. The major example of this is the RAE, which has had a significant impact but one which is entirely negative, as several responses in the 2006 survey clearly indicated), including this one:

The RAE is recognised as the single most destructive/disruptive factor with regard to the development of learning & teaching here. The research agenda really is affecting all aspects of our operation, from recruitment of probationary staff to our PG Cert, to attendance at educational development events (respondent, pre-1992 university).

This leads EDUs in conflict with powerful interest groups within their institutions, particularly in research-intensive universities, as we have discussed above.

Despite some notable exceptions, most respondents reported that both the national and institutional environment were more favourable to educational development than five years ago. A major reason for this has been the value to EDUs of both TQEF funding and the embedding of Learning and Teaching Strategies. However, enthusiasm for other nationally funded initiatives is more muted. It is recognised that CETLs have the potential to have a big impact, especially in those institutions which were awarded one

or more CETL, but for the remainder the consensus is that the 'jury is out'. Although the NTF scheme was not rated highly, there is a recognition that it has encouraged many institutions to establish rewards and promotion routes for excellence in teaching.

## 6. Characteristics of successful educational development

In this final section I want to address a question that has been asked many times. What conclusion can we draw from this data about the best way of approaching educational development? Can we come to any conclusion about what structures, what approaches, and what practices are most likely to be successful in the current context of higher education?

It is important to point out that none of the three surveys attempted to evaluate the success of the ED centres that responded to the request for information. It is not possible to draw any firm conclusions about which ED centres are being successful in meeting their own goals, although some respondents did make reference to practices and approaches that they believed had been successful.

I present below a summary of what I believe to be ten characteristics of good practice. I hope that this statement of characteristics, and the principles they imply, will spark a debate within the educational development community about whether these are indeed the most important features of successful ED, and about how they should be interpreted in practice.

Successful educational development is:

- Context-sensitive: works within and is sensitive to institutional and disciplinary cultures
- Flexible: is responsive to changing circumstances and needs of students and staff
- Inclusive: works with all categories of staff who impact on student learning, and with students and with management
- Collaborative: is respectful of teachers as professionals and individuals, their skills and knowledge, and seeks to work with them as equals
- Scholarly: is based on sound knowledge of theory and seeks to collect evidence in a rigorous manner
- Strategic: linked to institutional leadership, directed and informed by defined and negotiated short and long-term goals
- Multi-layered: promotes a wide range of activities, both bottom-up and top-down approaches, central and Faculty-based initiatives
- Visible: good communication with all levels of the institution
- Resourced: has an adequate number of appropriately qualified staff to accomplish tasks assigned to it and has effective leadership
- Reflexive: is continually engaged in critical self-evaluation of strategies and practices

Let us consider briefly what each of these characteristics mean.

## **1. Context-sensitive**

It is now well-understood that educational development centres must be sensitive to institutional and disciplinary cultures if they are to succeed. Each institution has features relating to its history, its structures and personalities, its perceived place in the hierarchy of institutions, its vision for the future, its student profile, and its physical location, which make it unique. Many of these features are liable to change, as circumstances and individuals in leadership positions change, though some remain relatively stable. Educational development centres must be aware of what will work within its institution and equally what will not.

But higher education institutions are not monolithic organisations. There will be considerable variations within them. Significant variations from the point of view of ED are the relative importance attached to teaching, the nature of the student profile, disciplinary cultures, and departmental and Faculty leadership. The perceived status of the department will also be important. For each department, key questions to ask are: is it one that has strong student recruitment or does it struggle to achieve student numbers? Is it relatively conservative in its approaches to pedagogy, or is it open to change and to innovation? Does it have a tradition of working with central departments, or is it relatively closed and isolationist in its outlook?

The implication of these considerations is that to be successful, ED centres must be not only well-informed about their institution and its constituent parts, but also able to adapt its approaches to the different demands made by each department.

## **2. Flexible**

It follows from what we have said above, namely that the context of higher education is dynamic not static, that EDUs must be responsive to changing circumstances and to the shifting needs of students and staff. As we saw in Section Two, a change in management responsibility for teaching and learning can have significant implications for the EDU. Equally, changes affecting the whole staff, such as restructuring, re-branding, pay-negotiations, and the RAE must be taken into account. Consequently, strategies that may have been successful under previous circumstances may not have the same impact when those circumstances change. To be successful, EDUs must be willing to change their tactics and use different approaches to achieve their goals.

Flexibility is also called for when there are changes within the EDU itself. Changes to staffing, leadership, and location within the institution will all require significant adjustments. As the HEDG survey has shown, EDUs are prone to many changes – increases or decreases in staffing, incorporation or loss of a function, and organisational restructuring. The conclusion must be that educational developers must be flexible people willing to work within changing political and economic circumstances.

There is, however, a key question that all EDUs must answer for themselves when they are faced with rapid change – what are the values and goals which are non-negotiable? Are there some kinds of change which challenge the professional integrity of the staff? The way in which those questions are answered will place limits on flexibility.

### **3. Inclusive**

It is important that EDUs are seen to work with all categories of staff who impact on student learning, and with students and with management. Teaching responsibilities are held by senior as well as new staff, by postgraduates, by learning support staff in the library, technicians and Information Technology (IT) trainers, as well as academic staff, by part-time and contract staff as well as full-time employed staff. Within these staffing groups, and among students, there will be other important identities – gender, ethnicity, nationality, age, disability, sexual orientation – which may also be significant influences on how people respond to educational development. Inclusivity also means providing support to management and central staff, as well as to teachers and students.

Whilst it is easy to use the rhetoric of inclusivity, in practice this can be very demanding, especially on a small unit, which can find its limited resources being over-stretched. It means that EDUs must have mechanisms in place to identify the needs of each of these different constituencies – personal interviews, focus groups, surveys, attendance at meetings, and needs analyses – though often it is informal knowledge gathered through contact with the many different individuals and sections of the institution which is equally valuable.

For EDUs to be successful, they must be perceived as responding directly to the concerns of all constituencies, but without becoming so identified with a particular section that others become alienated.

The Faculty developer must be prepared to sometimes walk the tightrope in a delicate balancing act but must also recognize that the center needs assistance of all of these constituencies to build consensus on the best use of its resources (Sorcinelli 2002: 11).

### **4. Collaborative**

Successful educational development must be seen to work in collaboration with all its varied constituencies if it is not to be seen as a 'colonising' activity (Manathunga 2006). This means actively resisting and rejecting the idea that 'developers' have all the answers, whether it be on responding to student diversity, using learning technologies, or using innovative assessment methods. Educational developers should have specialist knowledge, which they are expected to share with those they work with. This does not mean that they can act as if it is always the 'other' who must be brought in line. Not only does this provoke resistance among teaching staff who feel disempowered and patronised, it fails to take account of the level of specialist knowledge that teaching staff bring to their work.

The best educational developers are respectful of teachers as professionals and individuals, their skills and knowledge, and seek to work with them as equals. This means working collaboratively with individuals and groups within teaching departments. If 'development' is to occur, then it must happen in the department and with individual teachers, and this means that it is they, not the developers, who must want to bring about that change. This means that they must understand why the change is necessary or desirable. As far as possible, respected colleagues in departments should be brought in to guide the EDU through advisory groups, networks, and learning communities, and to work with the EDU on implementing strategies, for example, revising promotion criteria, running 'away days', and contributing to guidelines and publications.

This is only possible if EDUs are seen to work within a predominantly 'collegial' rather than 'managerial' model. As we have seen (in Section 3.3) this can cause conflict with a manager who has different ideas about how to implement change, but in the long run educational development can only work through processes which are based on a community of professionals. This means actively creating opportunities where dialogue and discussion can take place, not only between the EDU and teaching departments, but also between members of teaching departments with shared concerns and interests. Using Teaching Fellows to lead on discussion forums and task groups demonstrates a willingness to share responsibility.

## **5. Scholarly**

As the scholarship of academic development (Eggins and Macdonald 2003) has grown into an extensive and scholarly research field over the last decade, there is a growing expectation that practitioners in this field should be using and referring to the literature that is now available: research on student learning, pedagogy, assessment, students and staff within socio-cultural contexts, technology, organisational structures and change, political and economic theory and philosophy. Given the breadth of the field it is unlikely that anyone could have expert knowledge in every aspect of educational development, so some specialisation is necessary, reflecting the different roles that staff occupy (as Section 2.5 revealed). By having this specialist knowledge, staff acquire credibility among their academic peers and have a sound base to inform the advice that ED staff are often required to give to individuals and departments.

Within a team of staff it is desirable to have the main fields represented so that an interdisciplinary analysis can inform the work of the centre. Since staff need to remain familiar with the latest developments in their specialism, a good EDU will have processes to assist staff to become qualified in their field, by studying for a PhD for example, and will support staff to undertake research and writing in their field as an essential part of their job. Ideally, this research will provide data that can feed into institutional decision-making and to the work of the EDU.

As the evidence in this study shows conclusively, EDUs in the UK are also increasingly active in supporting scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) among academic staff. This requires a variety of strategies – funding to support research projects, promotion criteria that give recognition and reward for those engaged in SoTL, publications, funding to enable staff to attend relevant conferences, networks that support those new to the field, and events (conferences and seminars) which provide opportunities for staff to present their findings and on 'work in progress'.

## **6. Strategic**

All EDUs are faced with choices about where to direct their limited resources. The range of possible activities is too wide for any EDU to accomplish all of them. This means that EDUs must be strategic about how time, staff and funding are deployed. Activities need to be directed and informed by defined and negotiated short and long-term goals. The ways in which decisions are taken about these goals will vary from one institution to another. Both external drivers – in particular opportunities to bid for funding (as we saw in Section Five) – and internal strategic priorities need to be balanced.

It is helpful to establish a set of principles that set out the rationale and the goals of the centre, which can be communicated to the institution (Sorcinelli 2002: 14-15), as a way of helping to choose between competing demands and establish priorities. Directors need to consult widely with both their own staff, and institutional management to help establish strategic priorities. A Teaching and Learning Strategy which has been arrived at through thorough consultation across the whole institution can be an important document for establishing strategic goals. Such a strategy document should include targets, with timetables and responsibilities clearly identified.

EDUs need to take account of what they can accomplish effectively and which will have maximum impact to ensure that their work is both appreciated and recognised. This also means taking account of what academic staff believe is open to change and needs to change (Fanghanel 2006). Many goals will be identified as collaborative, that is, they are only achievable when managed jointly with some other organisational sections of the university or college. Some may be identified as the sole responsibility of the EDU. Ensuring that the politically important individuals in the institution give their backing to the EDUs' priorities is highly desirable. Without that support there are high risks of running up against opposition at some point.

Being strategic requires working on activities that impact on the institutional culture, using structural organisational features such as promotion criteria, design of learning spaces, establishing responsibilities for teaching and learning, and developing the learning technology infrastructure, rather than being swamped by short-term consultancies, which may be highly valued by those who receive the support of the EDU, but which have little impact on structures.

## **7. Multi-layered**

EDUs need to work at many levels within their institution. It is important to promote a wide range of activities, which include both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' approaches, both central and Faculty-based initiatives. This means working to ensure that senior management appreciate what the EDU can do and is doing, whilst not neglecting work with individual staff members and departments. EDUs that fail to achieve this balance will have limited impact.

As we have seen, many EDUs have put in place structural arrangements to ensure that there is a network of staff committed to educational development at the department or Faculty level, as well as in the 'centre'. These may be called 'teaching and learning coordinators' or 'Teaching Fellows'. Their relationship with the central unit varies from one place to another, but the essential requirements for any such system to work are good appointments, adequate resourcing and good two-way communications systems between the centre and the periphery and also between the Faculty-based staff. Providing these conditions are met, it is often possible for locally based developers to achieve change which is better rooted within the discipline and accepted by academic staff. The resourcing for devolved schemes needs to take account of the time and training that department-based staff need to be effective.

## **8. Visible**

EDUs suffer from a disadvantage that does not affect most other central units. This is quite simply that many staff, and certainly most students, do not understand what

educational development is or what EDUs do. In some ways, this is not surprising, because it is a relatively new field (Bath and Smith 2004) and to some extent its purposes and boundaries are still being debated within the educational development community (Martensson and Roxa 2005).

It is therefore essential that EDUs should pay attention to establishing good communication and high visibility within their institution. One way of doing this is to involve senior staff in EDU events and activities.

Senior academic officers give tremendous credibility and visibility to the program by participating in its activities and by naming these activities as important values of the institution (Sorcinelli 2002: 13).

Visibility is also achieved by carefully selecting strategic goals that will achieve both attention and be seen to be valuable. It is also essential to ensure that your achievements are well-publicised and your contribution to the university well-known.

An important part of visibility is having good communication systems with all the different sections of the university, using a variety of types of publications, e-mail lists, and website. It is important that these forms of communication are accessible and clear. Wareing has provided evidence that educational development jargon can be obscure to non-specialists, so EDUs need to be sure that the language used is understood by all (Wareing 2004).

## **9. Resourced**

Undoubtedly, a key element in any successful EDU is having the resources to be able to accomplish the task that you are expected to fulfill, and the most important resource is the team of staff employed in the unit. Since the precise remit of each EDU varies between institutions, it is impossible to specify what roles any EDU must include. However, most units, as we have seen, need three or more academic posts to work with Faculties, specialist staff to work on e-learning developments and training, and staff to manage projects, whether these are internally or externally funded. The leadership of the PG Certificate and any Diploma and Master's programmes also requires dedicated staff. Other staffing depends on the roles the unit performs, for example, student evaluation, training student representatives, student-facing services, such as academic writing development and support for postgraduate students. A research assistant can be invaluable to carry forward evaluation and research activity.

A good team must also have effective leadership. Heads of ED need to consider ways they can improve their own effectiveness in the highly complex and political role that they occupy. They have responsibilities for the staff in their units as well as to the institution as a whole.

## **10. Reflexive**

A good EDU is continually engaged in critical self-evaluation of strategies and practices. This means involving others, students and staff, in providing feedback to the unit on its strategies and its activities. It also means providing sufficient opportunities for the EDU team to come together to discuss its priorities and its approaches.

Longer term evaluation is expensive on time, but is essential if the EDU is to be able to justify its existence, particularly when institutions are having to make cuts. Too often,



EDUs are over-reliant on feedback forms from events. These cannot be ignored, but they are not the only source of data. Evaluation means having a theory of change against which the impact of activities and strategies can be judged (Knight et al. 2006).

Most important, being reflexive means being open to challenges and questioning assumptions, keeping up-to-date with the literature and recent research, writing about and explaining what the EDU is doing, meeting with other EDU professionals to discuss alternative approaches to common problems, theorising what is taken for granted, and undertaking research into those things we do not yet fully understand.

Any list of qualities is bound to be partial, and readers may feel I have placed the emphases in the wrong places. But even the reader who agrees with my list may be suspicious of what seems to be the counsel of perfection. In practice, we are all struggling to find ways of working that are effective and possible, within limited time and limited resources and limited capacities. None of us possess all the qualities we would wish to have. Nevertheless, given the fact that educational development is still in the process of defining itself, it is hoped that this study and the conclusions I have drawn will contribute to the debate and ultimately to the achievement of a higher education system that is not only more effective and satisfying for our students, but which will also meet the aspirations of staff.

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