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Edited by
Melanie Ashford,
Learning and Teaching Adviser

Editorial

Higher education has certainly hit the media headlines over the past few months. Issues of how the sector is to be funded – and by whom – have, of course, been paramount. And almost for the first time, there has been discussion about how other countries provide and finance their higher education systems. But the media have also highlighted other issues: especially the widening participation initiatives that have been introduced – and changed – that are designed not only to increase the numbers in the sector, but to diversify the student population. By the time you read this, the government's long awaited – and much speculated upon – White Paper should have been published. How radical are its proposals? How consistent are its objectives? How capable of being implemented are its plans? Those are questions for the immediate future. But they suggest that the world of higher education is in dynamic, as well as, in many institutions, in debt. All of this presents a challenge to the sector as a whole and raises important issues about freedom, autonomy and staff morale in a more market-driven, government-controlled and more rigorously scrutinised environment.

Inevitably that broader context is the environment within which SWAPltsn has to operate, but now at a formative period in its own development, it also has set its own agenda that reflects the concerns, issues and opportunities of its subject communities in social work and social policy. There are, of course, major challenges facing both subject communities in the year ahead. The new social work award in England, Scotland and Wales has generated much discussion about the future form of professional social work training, and the relationship between the academy and the fields of practice. Throughout these discussions, SWAPltsn has

been fortunate to have on its Steering Group Joan Orme, Chair of the Joint Universities Council Social Work Education Committee and Malcolm Payne, and his successor Ann Davis, representing the Association of Social Work Professors.

In social policy, SWAPltsn's strategic plan highlights a number of relevant concerns. These include:
Recruitment, student numbers and service teaching;
Employability of social policy graduates;
Pedagogic research, including case studies of good practice elicited during interviews undertaken last year with a wide range of social policy teaching staff.

There are also encouraging links between SWAPltsn and the subject's representative organisations. Jackie Rafferty, Director, is now a member of the Social Policy Association Executive, and I currently represent both the Joint Universities Council (JUC) Social Policy Committee and the School of Policy Studies at the University of Bristol, one of the joint host sites of SWAPltsn.

There is much activity (including the very useful website) being carried out and held together by a dedicated and multi-skilled team. Increasingly, as the work moves on, there is more opportunity for dissemination and discussion of good practice and ways of learning from each other by means of all kinds of network opportunities in both subject communities. In SWAPltsn – as in the world of higher education in general – the mood is dynamic and the commitment is to delivery.

David Gladstone
Steering Group Member

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SWAPItsn Update

Staff changes

Staff appointments and changes at SWAP Itsn include

- Julia Phillips is our new centre co-ordinator
- Dr Francis Owtram is our new knowledge and information officer
- Sue Orton, Learning and Teaching Adviser is now based at University of Sussex
- Tom Hopkins and Julia Waldman are both doing project consultancy work for us
- Elaine Allenby-Parker provides clerical support at the University of Bristol

Workshops

Workshops and conferences organised by or with significant SWAPItsn input since our last newsletter include

- UK Joint Social Work Education Conference 2002 *Redesigning social work: education for tomorrow*
- Two one day workshops to assist *Programmes planning for the new three year degree in England*
- Workshop for the Child Care Teachers Network: *Planning the Child Care Curriculum for the New Award in Social Work*

Forthcoming

- 21 February 2003 *Exploring student recruitment, retention and employability issues in social policy in higher education* at the Social Care Institute for Excellence, London
- 19 May 2003 Workshop for the Child Care Teachers Network, SCIE offices, London Bridge, London
- 21-22 July UK Joint Social Work Education Conference 2003 *Social Work Education: Learning From Our Past, Shaping Our Future* at the University of Warwick
- 15-17 July 2003 Social Policy Association 2003 *SPA Annual Conference* at Teeside University

Collaborative Itsn projects

- The **Mental Health Higher Education** project led by Social Work and Social Policy in partnership with Itsns for

Psychology; Health Sciences and Practice; Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine with Jill Anderson at Sheffield University appointed as project leader.

- The **Interprofessional Education** project is another Itsn partnership project involving us, Health Sciences and Practice; and Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine with Marion Helme as project leader.

SWAPItsn news

- SWAPItsn is offering to facilitate 2-3 hour consultation sessions for departments and regional groups on e-learning, SENDA and Person Centred Teaching Skills. Consultations are free and will draw on the expertise and experience of all participants, provide a theoretical basis and resources to inform and assist development, model a person-centred approach to learning and teaching and develop department action plans. For further details email m.locke@swap.ac.uk or call on 02380 597782
- SWAPItsn is now the social policy and social work resource provider for the Social Sciences Information Gateway (SOSIG) which is the social sciences hub of the Resource Discovery Network. We are also engaged in a partnership with them and other Itsn centres to facilitate data exchange between RDN hubs and Itsn centres.
- Our mini projects are described on page 11 of this newsletter
- A monthly e-bulletin is now produced and sent to all on our database who wish to receive it.
- SWAPItsn and Centre for Human Services Technology (CHST) are involved with the Department of Health in initiatives around developing e-learning. See page 3

Website developments

- A new menu system now enables navigation directly to all sub areas from any page as well as printer friendly version of pages and text only version.
- We now have seventeen case studies of innovative teaching practice provided by our constituency. Many thanks to all those who have contributed. We now offer a £25 book token for all case studies that are accepted.
- A user survey is planned to take place over the next few months to enable us to enhance the usability of the website.
- Substantial development work has taken place on the Network Exchange in preparation for its long awaited launch.

Social Work goes 'e' in 2003 - with more in 2004

Learning and teaching online self assessment

- Do you shop for books, CDs and groceries online?
- Do you check your bank account or find out about holiday destinations or train times online?
- Do you keep in touch with your kids, partner, friends, family, via email?
- Do your practitioner colleagues regularly use email and the web?
- Do you use the Internet to find out about conferences, and government policy, or what's been published in your favourite journal?
- Do you embed e-learning to support your students to find information, learn and communicate online?

The reform of social work education and the introduction of the social work degree within the UK has given us the perfect window of opportunity to harness the information age to support and embed a step change in social work learning and teaching methods.

"Professionals working in a world where integrated service delivery is rapidly becoming the norm must be provided with equally integrated learning opportunities at all stages. And they will need to ensure that they maximise the opportunities from e-learning which remains much misunderstood and much underestimated."

Cathie Jamieson, Minister for Education and Young People, Scottish Parliament, April 2002

The work described below aims to ensure that e-learning is not only understood and 'estimated' but that planned collaborative funded relevant developments enable a critical mass of resource to be available alongside the skills and pedagogic expertise to embed e-learning as an integral part of your repertoire of teaching methods.

Social work e-learning in Scotland

The Scottish Executive has established a working group, chaired by Neil Ballantyne, University of Strathclyde, to take e-learning forward into the social work degree. The conference held in February 2003 provided the opportunity to raise the profile and importance of e-learning and discuss with social work academics from Scottish HEIs to the ideas, concepts and impressive proposals that are being generated within the working group. The SWAP website will host information on these developments or for further information contact Tim Warren, Scottish Executive - tim.warren@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or Jackie Rafferty, SWAP - j.rafferty@swap.ac.uk

Social work e-learning in England

The Department of Health commissioned SWAPItsn to undertake a Scoping Study 'Building capacity in e-learning for the social work degree'. Our intention is that the report, or a summary, will be available from the SWAP website after it has been accepted by the DH e-learning Steering Group. As part of the study a discussion list was set up to ensure a collaborative and inclusive approach to developments with the project is taken.

A second phase of the Department of Health project is in progress; the aim of which is to ensure as many e-learning resources relevant to the social work degree requirements are available in time for implementation of the degree in 2003 for the courses in England that have opted for an early start.

Contact Jackie Rafferty or Julia Waldman for more information.

Those of you who already make use of the virtual learning resource - Research Mindedness

(www.sws.soton.ac.uk/rminded or

www.elsc.org.uk/skillsbuilding/researchskills.htm) will be

interested to know that an update and redevelopment is underway and will be ready for piloting late Spring 2002.

The work is being undertaken by the Centre for Human Service Technology and funded by SCIE. If you would like to receive progress reports or are interested in contributing to the piloting / test and trial phase please contact Tom Hopkins at

tomhopkinsandassociates@compuserve.com

Social Work and Social Policy at HUSITA7 August 25-28, 2003, Hong Kong Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Social Inclusion

Yet one more unashamed plug. The international conference on the use of e-learning within social work education and training, and on the use of IT within practice, will take place in Hong Kong from August 25 - 18th. This will be the 7th HUSITA conference. Call for papers is out <http://www.hkcss.org.hk/husita7/> The HUSITA 7 conference will appeal to social work and social policy academics, who are interested in e-learning, social inclusion, poverty and the digital divide.

Jackie Rafferty, Director, SWAPItsn

Social policy student recruitment, retention and employability - SWAPItsn support activities

Introduction

SWAP is undertaking a series of activities between December 2002 and July 2003 that focus upon recruitment, retention and employability issues as they relate to social policy students in higher education, in consultation with the Social Policy Association (SPA) Executive.

- Identification of innovative practice in recruitment, retention and employability within social policy programmes
- Provision of a workshop for social policy academics to:
 - share findings from above and experiences and perspectives
 - generate action plans for development of materials by SWAP for use by social policy programme providers to support student recruitment
- development of materials, to be ready for SPA conference in July 2003

Why these issues?

SWAP undertook a survey of its constituents to identify issues influencing teaching and learning activities that would help to shape SWAP's work in future years (www.swap.ac.uk/swap/survey.asp). Responses from social policy academics indicated student recruitment to be a common area of concern and other sources endorsed this picture. A review of other subject Itsn further identified that social policy staff are not alone in having concerns about trends in recruitment and retention of students.

Within the wider context of higher education developments recruitment, retention and employability issues clearly blend with the widening participation agenda and activities such as personal development plans and key skills initiatives.

Some reasons for recruitment concerns:

- Concerns generally about costs of attending university and the confusing array of grants and subsidies for students on low incomes
- Fall in number of applications for social policy single honours programmes
- Decline in numbers of single honours programmes
- Fragmentation of social policy teaching across allied programmes and discipline teaching
- Competition from social work degrees, enhanced by the £3000 bursary available to students

- Pressures generally experienced by programmes that appeal to mature students in full-time employment.

Some examples of proactive initiatives:

- Developing new PR strategies to identify and promote social policy's unique selling points to 16-18 year olds
- Placing student welfare at the centre of activities when working with non-traditional students
- Return-to-study interviews conducted with all students who interrupt their studies for health or related reasons.
- Summer school with projects built around social policy issues
- Citizenship training for FE students, working with FE lecturers

Employability issues

- Need to demonstrate to students how what they are learning is relevant to a broad range of jobs, HE progress files and PDPs may facilitate this
- Need for consultation with employers
- Need for balance in the curriculum between provision of a set of knowledge and skills that offer transferability and flexibility versus specialist discrete area of academic enquiry. For example a shift from 'transferable' skills to 'professional and business' skills to support the use of specialist knowledge base was identified as helpful for geoscience students (Penn, 2001).
- Employers look for evidence of students being able to work as part of a team
- In general first degrees do not provide the passport to employment that they once did. Social Policy merely reflects a broader trend.
- Changing patterns of employment within public and private sectors (Audit Commission, 2002)

In addition there is an interface between student recruitment levels and their long term impact on staff numbers. Research identified that current recruitment levels will more than maintain staff numbers in the short-term but that recruitment may need to increase to maintain staff numbers in the longer term (2010-11), (HEFCE, 2002, p.28).

Widening Participation in Further and Higher Education in the South West

<http://www.wpsw.co.uk/> - collaborative initiative to create an infrastructure to support a region-wide approach to disadvantaged and under-represented groups. Site includes extensive links to relevant papers and research.

Audit Commission (2002) Recruitment and retention – a public service workforce for the twenty-first century, London: Audit Commission

Exchange, Issue 2 Summer 2002 – Employability

British Library's Social Policy Information Service

<http://www.bl.uk/services/information/ssresource.html>

Callender, C. (2002) The costs of widening participation: contradictions in new labour's student funding policies,

Social Policy and Society, Vol. 1, 2002, p.83-94

Dumas-Hines, F. (2001) College Student Journal Promoting diversity: recommendations for recruitment and retention of minorities in higher education, College Student Journal Issue: Sept, 2001 online version <http://www.findarticles.com>

HEFCE (2002) Academic staff: trends and projections, October 2002/43 Issues Paper, London: Hefce

Kenyon, S. (2002) SWAPItsn Recruitment, www.swap.ac.uk/widen/recruit.asp, pp1-3

Penn, I. (2001) What does the employer want? A British Geological perspective on student employability in Planet Special Edition One June 2001 pp 4-5, Itsn Subject Centre for Geography, Earth and Environmental Science

Julia Waldman

Learning and Teaching Adviser, SWAPItsn

Considering students with disabilities

For all of us in higher education now, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) has been law since September 2002. The principle behind this legislation is that disabled students should receive full access to education and other related provision, and should have the same opportunities as non-disabled people to benefit from whatever provision is available. The statements which impact most are that as 'responsible bodies' HEIs have an 'anticipatory duty' towards the requirements of all disabled people and to make 'reasonable adjustments' for those who might otherwise be substantially disadvantaged.

Whilst the single largest category of disability remains dyslexia, and HEIs have developed some expertise in supporting these students, there is a growth in the number of applications from students with different needs that is challenging the sector. The invisibility of some of these disabilities often conceals the degree of severity, (eg. students with mental health problems, Asperger's Syndrome and the profoundly deaf) challenging selection procedures, traditional teaching and assessment methods and the administrative framework for all of these. (SWANDS 2001).

This legislation is having different impact on our two subject communities. For social work colleagues the planning and development for the new degree is providing an opportunity to look at curriculum development and access from the perspective of students with disabilities. It is clear that there is some tension between the desire to make courses available to a wide range of students and therefore to design a curriculum accessible for all students, and the rigors of accountability, health checks and

professional standards for employment which might preclude this for some students. This is yet to be explored and tested. Social policy colleagues may have a little more flexibility in designing and adapting their curricula for a range of students because they are without specific professional accreditation requirements. One thing is certain, the impact of the legislation will be on individuals and departments who are already stretched with very little spare time or resources.

It is time to consider some smarter ways of working. Time to pool ideas and ensure that examples of good practice are shared and duplicated. You may not realise that many of the improvements your department could make will benefit all students not just those with disabilities. So here are some common situations with possible ways forward:

Developing good practice

There will be examples of good strategies for students with disabilities in learning, teaching and assessment in your department, and sharing them can be very useful. Gather these and circulate it to all staff (including administrators). Then, put the item on the agenda of the next department meeting and discuss implementing the good practice throughout the department.

Course handouts and documentation

How and when you produce course material can have a huge positive impact. Students can prepare if you provide the key points of your lecture(s) on a PowerPoint hand out beforehand.

Try to make it departmental policy that all course notes will be produced before delivery of a session. Good practice indicates that these will be:

- printed on pastel coloured matt paper
- in black or dark blue print
- with only one clear font type
- font size 12 minimum
- with number and symbol protocols simple and clear
- without split words, italics or underlining.

Seminar and group work

The seminar or group discussion can be the most difficult time for students with disabilities. What is the required standard of group facilitation within your department? Try co-facilitating and supporting each other to exchange good practice ideas. At the start of seminars try:

- talking with the students about what behaviour and participation you and they expect from seminars or group work
- taking time to agree ground rules to ensure fair participation
- discussing learning and teaching expectations with students and clarify what will be expected and delivered.

Working with colleagues in university support units

It is important to put some energy into developing equal working relationships with colleagues in your university support units before a meeting with students. The impression created in meetings needs to be positive and supportive of the student, and this can be difficult if the staff 'team' has not met before. Consider appointing a departmental/subject equal opportunities co-ordinator who can take a lead on this work and hold the 'subject knowledge' and possibilities within a meeting.

Course Intranet

Think about developing a course website so that students can download information in their own time, and consider the material at their own pace before and after the session.

References and resources:

SENDA Compliance in HE - South West Academic Network for Disability Support (SWANDS). A HEFCE funded project which has produced an action audit to guide colleagues responsible for admissions, teaching, learning and assessment through the process of embedding their practice to make it inclusive. It is really worth having. It is available at <http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/disability> as a .pdf file download to your desktop or email mmkemp@plymouth.ac.uk

Accessible curricula: good practice for all. An excellent starter guide. It can be downloaded from <http://www.techdis.ac.uk/pdf/curricula.pdf> as a free .pdf file.

Access All Areas: Disability, technology and learning. This is aimed at all staff in further and higher education and contains advice and case studies relating to many aspects of the learning process in relation to disabled people and students with learning difficulties. The book is available from <http://www.techdis.ac.uk/accessallareas/AAA.pdf> as a free pdf file.

Teachability project: a more thorough review of your course and its core objectives. <http://www.ispn.gcal.ac.uk/teachability/index.html>

The National Disability Team. The NDT manages and co-ordinates projects to enhance disability provision in fifty higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland. The National Disability Team works towards: provision of advice, support and practical guidance to project and other institutional staff, transfer to the whole higher education sector; experience, programmes and models of effective practice emerging from this. <http://www.natdisteam.ac.uk>

SKILL National Bureau for Students with Disabilities. Good information, information sheets and resources. They provide briefing and staff training on SENDA. <http://www.skill.org.uk/>

Successful student diversity: case studies of practice in learning and teaching and widening participation (web only). This document provides examples of practice to improve planning at a school or departmental level in widening participation (including disability) and learning and teaching. It is not prescriptive, but identifies common principles that institutions can adapt to their own circumstances, to help them recruit and support a diverse range of students. http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2002/02_48.htm

Sue Orton
Learning and Teaching Adviser, SWAPItsn

How was it for me?

Becoming a National Teaching Fellow

The selection criteria for the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) are demanding—reasonably enough, considering that Fellows are supposed to be ‘individuals of the highest calibre’ in learning and teaching, and that they win £50,000. Importantly, it’s not about being a star performer in the lecture theatre. Instead, the NTFS construes ‘teaching excellence’ much more widely. The yardsticks include ability to influence and inspire students *and colleagues*. Here, my job gave me a definite advantage. I was Faculty Learning and Teaching Coordinator, dividing my time equally between teaching social policy and enabling my colleagues to do even better work with students. I had also met some existing Fellows and mentally measured myself against them. All in all, I thought I had a chance. So let’s do it!

An initial University briefing in November 2001 told me that the first step was to obtain the nomination from my Faculty. Maybe others were too daunted, but I was the only local candidate, and I immediately went on to submit a brief application for the one University nomination, using the NTFS criteria and enclosing a memo of support from my Dean. There were applicants from elsewhere in the University, but I was very pleased to gain the 2002 nomination for Nottingham Trent.

In January, the real work began. The core of the first stage of an NTFS application is the ‘Claim for Fellowship’. Here, the applicant attempts to establish that s/he is ‘excellent’, according to the criteria. This was really difficult, partly because, as I have said to friends, it’s basically ‘a bragging job’—not something that comes naturally.

However, an experienced colleague kept pushing and cajoling me to say more, and to evidence everything, using the portfolio that I keep. By the final (sixth?) draft, my ‘Claim’ had grown from 2,000 to 5,000 words, crammed into five sides. Along with a citation signed by the Vice-Chancellor and various other supporting papers, it met the mid-February deadline.

I quickly learned there were 82 applications for 20 Fellowships. Not bad odds, except that it wasn’t a lottery. I knew my ‘Claim’ was strong, but what was the opposition like? Time ticked slowly by till the shortlist of 40 was announced in late March. Of course it was good to hear that I had made it to the final group. However, the pressure then intensified: the publicity grew, people were asking me about it, and I still had no clear idea what I was going to do at the next stage.

Shortlisted candidates must submit a plan for spending the £50,000, if they were to receive it. Oh, and it has to fit onto two sides of A4. Ten days over Easter went on a proposal that I eventually rejected because I thought it too broad. Then the inspiration came—build on the bank of social policy questions I had been using in tests for my Level 1 modules, extend my e-learning experience by computerising it, make it available to the whole sector, and promote the idea of testing social policy knowledge and understanding. Yes! Focused, useful, innovative, I thought. That should do, especially if I could make it tight and rigorous. A catchy name might help as well. The title came to me in a small ‘Eureka moment’ one afternoon—Social Policy Question Resource (SPQR), sharing the initials with the ancient Roman Empire. More gradual was

tightening the project, and fitting within the space restriction. It needed several drafts, advice from SWAPItsn, and meetings with my advisor before sending it off in late April.

More waiting, more publicity, more pressure. The University’s in-house magazine ran a feature on me. I’d better be successful, or it would hurt! Then, on 22 May, the news came. A phone call from Prof. Sally Brown of the ILTHE told me I had won. It was euphoria for a few days, with even more publicity, including national press stories on the NTFS and the 20 winners. Then a lull till the very grand award ceremony in July. That was an excuse for a new dinner suit, and was a wonderful occasion. There I met the other winners—such a great bunch of people.

As I write this, life has moved on. I’ve been promoted, but not directly because of the Fellowship. Rather, the work on e-learning that I had been doing with social work and social policy students and staff led to both events. So now I have both a new job and SPQR to juggle with. Consequently, there’s a huge irony: after winning a national teaching prize I’m doing very little teaching. But the days aren’t dull. Some people now seem to listen to me more, and my networks are growing apace. It’s been a great 12 months!

Bob Rotheram, Nottingham Trent University

Reform of social work qualifying education in the UK: diversity and harmony?

As the reform of social work education across the UK gathers pace, the different ways in which development is taking place across the UK raise some interesting questions about social work education, standards and alignment between the four countries. This article can only provide a snapshot of current events as of January 2003, and a commentary on the issues that have so far emerged.

England

With initial implementation of the new BA set for autumn 2003, England is in the vanguard. By January 2003, 52 universities in England had been 'licensed' by the GSCC to offer the new degree-level professional qualification, with others following in 2004. There will be no more admissions to the DipSW beyond 2004.

The National Occupational Standards (NOS) and the Quality Assurance Authority Benchmark Statement for Social Work (QAA BMS) form the requirements for achievement of the degree. In addition the Department of Health requires students to study in the following key areas: human growth, development, mental health and disability; assessment, planning, intervention and review; communication skills with children, adults and those with particular communication needs; law; partnership working and information sharing across professional disciplines and agencies. Students must spend at least 200 days in 'structured academic learning under the direction of an educator'.

The requirements for practice learning stipulate that students must spend at least 200 days in practice settings, which cannot be accredited from prior experience. Students must have experience in at least 2 settings, undertaking 'statutory social work tasks including legal intervention', and providing services to at least 2 user groups. All students must undergo assessed preparation for direct practice to ensure their safety to undertake practice learning; this must include the opportunity to develop a greater understanding of service users and to shadow an experienced social worker. It seems likely that the nature of practice learning will gradually change, with marked variation between programmes. A DH review of funding for practice learning is in progress with an announcement anticipated in Spring 2003. There is concern that the additional practice learning requirements will be hard to secure, and the Practice Learning Taskforce, hosted by TOPSS, has been set up to address this.

Important decisions about funding have been taken in other areas, notably the introduction from October 2003 of bursaries of at least £3000 per year plus tuition fees for all social work students at BA or PG/Masters level. A uniform grant of £500 for placement travel will also be awarded. Another decision welcomed by all involved in SWE in England was the allocation of £5000 for 02/03 to each university planning the BA to enable the involvement of service users and carers. The GSCC requires the involvement of users and carers alongside other stakeholders in the design, delivery and review of the degree.

Whilst the development of new postgraduate and masters courses is encouraged, HEIs must determine individually how they meet the requirements of the professional qualification as included in the BA and meet requirements for M level study. Given the stipulation of 200 days of practice learning and 200 days in structured academic learning these make the planning and delivery of masters routes difficult if they are to fit a two-year programme. Universities are developing different ways of addressing these problems.

Academic staff and their partners are now deeply immersed in planning the detail. The new degree has generally been welcomed, given the opportunity offered to revising and extending the curriculum after a period of 'planning blight'; there are many however who are casting envious eyes to the other UK countries that have the benefit of an additional year to prepare!

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the curriculum will be based not only on NOS and the QAA BMS, but also on a statement of expectation by users and carers (a document that is immensely valuable for its clarity) and some areas of knowledge specific to NI (the draft covers matters relating to the background of sectarian conflict, the political context of NI and some specific issues of social policy and practice). These will be combined into the Northern Ireland Framework Specification for the Degree in Social Work, to be launched in March. Another distinctive feature is that whilst students undertaking training in Northern Ireland will register with the NISCC before they commence training, following successful attainment of the degree, graduates wishing to work in Northern Ireland will be required to undertake an assessed year in employment before they can register with the NISCC. However, qualifying courses at postgraduate/masters level appear to have been ruled out; a two-year route to the BSW for those with a relevant degree may emerge instead. Overall numbers of students in social work education look set for an increase to 300 to meet the current deficit of qualified social workers in NI, and although there has not yet been an announcement about bursaries, they are generally expected. A regional partnership across the country is likely to have executive functions in relation to the provision of practice learning. The draft rules for the degree are due to be presented to the NISCC in March.

Scotland

The development of social work education in Scotland has included the publication of SiSWE (Standards in Social Work Education) which, uniquely, maps together the NOS and QAA BMS. These set the minimum outcome requirements for the new honours degree which will be introduced in all programmes from 2004. They are congruent with standards produced in Scotland for other professions such as nursing and teaching.

The SiSWE will underpin the curricula and no additional requirements are anticipated, making for a 'lighter touch' than England. Practice learning will be for 200 days but only 160 of these are required to be in practice settings, the balance can be provided for through observation etc. The funding of practice learning has not been determined. Like England the government commissioned a study of the issue, although the Scotland study went further than that of England and attempted to cost practice learning. Unlike England, it will be possible to APL against practice learning as well as against academic work. Bursaries for undergraduates are not expected but this has not yet been confirmed.

Postgraduate programmes will continue, based on SiSWE, but with the advantage over England that completion of a post-grad programme within the usual academic calendar will be possible. Funding for postgraduate bursaries is expected to remain, particularly given the workforce crisis in Scotland. The government is interested in exploring possibilities for 'fast tracking' people with professional qualifications such as teaching or nursing.

Wales

In Wales, the development of the new award is welcomed by many who feel that the opportunities for partnership working across the 22 authorities will be enhanced with the creation of an all-Wales strategic partnership (involving employers, educators and legislators) to co-ordinate provision, although local partnerships will also be encouraged. The national partnership will be concerned with recruitment, workforce planning and the quality and quantity of practice learning provision.

Again the NOS and QAA BMS will form the basis for the curriculum, alongside requirements to equip students to work in the context of the Welsh language and culture (including extending bi-lingual provision). Work is currently in hand to map the NOS over the three levels of the degree. Practice learning requirements will be for 200 days, with 20 days at level 1, 80 and level 2 and 100 at level 3, thus bringing a coherence to practice learning planning across the country. Bursary provision is expected; some academics are concerned that a delay in announcing this may result in borders students migrating to courses in England. The debate about postgraduate provision is as yet

unresolved. Although students will be fully registered with the Care Council on qualification, work is being undertaken on a model for the first year in employment to help protect the workloads of newly qualified social workers. The rules and requirements for the new award are out for consultation; approval is expected in May.

Conclusion

Across the UK the renewed energy and enthusiasm for social work education is welcome, supported by the commissioning of research reports to help elucidate areas for the new degree. SCIE (the Social Care Institute for Excellence) which covers England and Wales, but also has working agreements with NI and Scotland, has commissioned research and guidance into specific areas of the curriculum (communication skills, assessment) alongside extensive work on user involvement in social work education. In Scotland there has been work on practice learning and e-learning. The DH has commissioned a report on learning for collaborative practice, whilst work on e-learning has also started. This investment is welcome and will help maintain the profile of social work education when social work practice looks set to move into a new phase.

The implications of the variance in requirements and provision of the new award across the four UK countries has, however, yet to be discovered. Government officials have worked to ensure 'alignment' across the UK, but doubtless there will be some issues that arise for staff wishing to relocate. It may also be that in time, whilst some important differences remain which address the specific needs of each country, we will be able to learn from each other about positive and successful ways of framing and delivering the new award.

Further information can be obtained as follows
<http://www.swap.ac.uk/Quality/SWreform/England.asp>

<http://www.doh.gov.uk/swqualification/>

<http://www.gssc.org.uk/>

Northern Ireland

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hss/swtr

<http://www.niscc.info/>

Scotland

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/>

<http://www.sssc.uk.com>

Wales

http://www.ccwales.org.uk/english/side/consultations/reform_socialwrk/reform_socwork_consult.htm

Hilary Burgess, Learning and Teaching Adviser, and Imogen Taylor, Co-Director, SWAPItsn

Building pedagogic resources for teaching undergraduate social policy

The SWAPItsn project researching undergraduate teaching in social policy has now reached the final analysis and reporting stage. The positive response to requests for participation in the project and the representation of a broad range of academic experiences throughout the UK are considered to be key areas of success within the research. We would thus like to take this opportunity to thank those who have committed time to talk to us about their teaching and contributed in other ways to the development of resources at SWAPItsn. A wealth of data has accrued through the interview process particularly regarding accounts of how and why lecturers teach the way they do and factors which affect individuals' capacities to develop their teaching. Reporting of the findings will take place throughout 2003 and beyond in a variety of formats.

Below are listed some of the topics and themes which have emerged from the data and are considered of interest to the professional community and worthy of further analysis and dissemination. Some illustrative quotations are included to give a flavour of the range of views expressed and which capture the essence of ideas to be developed and debates to be had.

- Lectures – What kind of approaches and formats do we use? How do we optimise their contribution to student learning?

"I do do a lot of lecturing. What can I say? It's a misfortune in my make-up, character or whatever that I'm actually a barn-storming lecturer and it's clearly the lectures that go down best with the students and the tragedy of it is that I know that lectures are fundamentally useless"

- Seminars – how do we manage small (and not so small) groups?
- Assessment – how do we assess our students? How does assessment influence the way we teach?

"I do think in higher education you know we shouldn't have to test everything that moves"

- Approaches to teaching

"What I would say my fundamental objective is, is that I was after the hearts, minds, souls and lives of students who I expected to sign up in blood for a career working in this field"

- How and why choices of teaching methods are made
- How and why changes to teaching approach/methods are made
- The use of teaching aids (visual, media, VLEs and ICT)

"I can't ever see myself going into any teaching situation without some kind of visual aid. Like I say, partly that's because I can't stand them all staring at me for an hour but also I think it helps me remember what I'm supposed to be saying"

"It isn't the reason I do it, but if you don't use a mixture of virtual and other contexts then students wonder why...and the module, the course, is seen as boring, not modern, not interesting"

- Perceptions of students and student learning
- The specific demands related to teaching social policy
- Sharing practice within a formal context

"We had a teaching and learning development group, that I'm a representative of, but I never get there because I'm always teaching when they're meeting"

- Sharing practice within an informal context
- Improving practice – What helps and what hinders?

Interviewer: *"How do you think effort put into teaching is rewarded currently in this institution?"*

Respondent: *"Oh just by making you do more"*

- The status of teaching vis-à-vis research

"I always find that strange that you can go into higher education and teach and the last thing that anyone's interested in is your teaching"

"The one best way of improving teaching in social policy and the social sciences is get rid of the RAE"

- The importance of teaching as an element of professional identity

"When I retire, when I die, I will be pleased that I've taught, I see it as an honourable thing to do, and it actually changes people's lives almost always for the better"

- Case studies – further examples of learning, teaching and assessment in practice

Suggestions for useful avenues of dissemination include regular short-length features in this newsletter and in SPA News and contributions to departmental Seminar series held in individual institutions. Any further suggestions would be welcomed.

Zoë Irving, Lecturer, University of Sheffield and Researcher SWAPItsn

Pat Young, Senior Lecturer, UWE and Learning and Teaching Adviser, SWAPItsn

Mini projects funded by SWAPItsn

Widening participation, creative use of web based resources, and involving service users in curriculum design and development, are well represented in the seven bids to receive SWAPItsn funding. Successful bids from NI, Scotland and England will all contribute to enhancing learning, teaching and assessment development across Social Policy and Social Work education. Projects run through 2003. All programmes will write a final report and hold a workshop for the SWAPItsn community in 2004. **Each project would welcome any help or advice with their research from the SWAPItsn community**

An investigation of group learning on practice placements

Trevor Lindsay University of Ulster, ft.lindsay@ulst.ac.uk
With developments of specialist practice teaching posts, where practice teachers have multiple students, the possibilities of developing group approaches to learning have not been fully evaluated or exploited. This project aims to investigate the potential of a group approach to practice placements where student numbers allow this as a feasible method. Good practice guidelines for group learning will be developed and piloted at a local practice learning centre.

Developing students' ability to critically analyse social work theory

Pam Green Lister University of Glasgow, Tel 0141 3306646 p.green@socsci.gla.ac.uk
The new social work degree places emphasis on the need for students to develop their skills of critical analysis. This project aims to develop our understanding of how we might assist students with respect to the integration of theory and practice. It will involve the students in producing a framework which they will use in classroom teaching, practice discussion groups and in a practice study assignment to assist their critical reflection. Practitioner-tutors and practice

teachers will participate in the use and evaluation of the framework through a series of workshops. A qualitative analysis will be made of student assignments with respect to critical analysis theory.

A holistic approach to support for learning and retention of 'non-traditional entry' students

Kate Kirk Manchester Metropolitan University, Tel 0161 247 2132 k.kirk@mmu.ac.uk

This programme will be carried out with students on the Applied Social Studies Programme in the Dept. of Community Studies. The programme has the highest proportion of non-traditional entry students. Coping with the complex and varying demands on time and energy together perhaps with negative memories of past education, can mitigate against successful progression through higher education. The main objective of this bid is to establish which elements of support contribute most significantly to student achievement and to evaluate the integrated approach. This will lead to developments that enhance provision.

Teaching and learning for successful transition to social policy and social work degrees for mature students

Helen Kenwright, John Brown York College, Learning and Development Unit in collaboration with University of York, Tel 01904 770314 hkenwright@yorkcollege.ac.uk

This project aims to improve transition from FE to HE, specifically for mature students entering degree courses in fields of Social Policy and Social Work. In recognition of the fact that mature learners in these disciplines have different needs from students taking direct school-to-university route, research will be undertaken to investigate the concerns, barriers and strengths affecting mature students starting their degrees. New curriculum

and teaching techniques will then be developed, based upon the research findings and wider evidence and good practice. It is expected that these initiatives will impact on teaching and learning in both sectors.

Understanding social work organisations: A case study

Mel Cadman, Kevin Pilkington and Fergus McNeill University of Strathclyde and University of Glasgow, Tel 0141 950 3610

m.cadman@strath.ac.uk

This project will enhance, extend and integrate the established problem-based approach to learning in one university, and e-learning deployment within the other in respect of current teaching around understanding social service organisations. Using a real local authority social services department and the community it serves, the development of web-based case material and CD Rom will provide a portrait of its needs, show interviews with some of its activists and key agency staff and explore through interviews with managers and workers the ways in which the local social service department tries to respond to community needs. The complexity of the process of creating developing, managing and supporting partnerships to achieve quality services against a backcloth of competing demands and finite resources will be fully explored, presenting students with a lively and 'real world' experience.

Effective development of research skills for undergraduate social policy students completing the research proposal module through the use of web-based learning resources

Susie Andretta, Peter Hodgkinson and Stuart Isaacs London Metropolitan University, Tel 0207 753 5031 s.andretta@londonmet.ac.uk
The study focuses on the learning needs of undergraduate social

policy students completing the research proposal module delivered in the Department Applied Social Studies. The main objective of this project involves the creation of a website focused on the development of research skills required to tackle the assessment of this module. These would cover the development of research skills through

interactive tutorials and offer access to online resources that characterise areas of research within social policy. The examination would focus on the extent of students' development of research skills and on the effectiveness of the online resources developed to guide and support the research process specifically relevant to the social policy curriculum.

Involving families living in poverty in the training of social workers

Anna Gupta Royal Holloway, University of London, Tel 01784 443379 anna.gupta@rhul.ac.uk

This project aims to bring together academics, service users and practitioners to develop and deliver a training programme on working with children and families living in poverty, for social workers. This will be developed and

delivered in partnership with families living in poverty, who have had experience of social services. As part of this project this funding will enable the preparation of a literature review on poverty, its impact on children and families and effective social work intervention, support for meeting attendance and the preparation of a final report.

Research review of the learning and teaching of assessment in social work education

Assessment is a crucial skill for social work practitioners and should underpin any intervention. The essential nature of assessment has been recognised as being one of the key areas to be included in the curriculum for the new social work awards. This project, which is being conducted for the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) and SWAPItsn, aims to identify good practice in learning and teaching of assessment skills. Social workers are required to make assessments at a range of levels of social organisation including individuals, families, carers, groups and communities and differential assessment skills may be required depending on the social units to be assessed. In addition to a review of published literature, it is recognised that many professional innovations never receive widespread attention due to the promotion of ideas being to limited audiences, such as colleagues or conference attendees. Even if innovations do make it into more widely distributed books or journals, it can be some years before this occurs. Consequently, the research team is particularly interested in hearing from anyone who has been involved with innovations in the teaching of assessment, at any level of social organisation. In addition to producing a report

which provides an overview of the issues and methods of teaching assessment skills, a series of case studies is planned to showcase innovative teaching at each level of social organisation. Although it is planning for the new award in England, it is hoped that some of the case studies will also come from Northern Ireland, Scotland and/ or Wales. If possible, we would like some of these case studies to involve partnerships with clients or other stakeholders. Further information about this project, to be completed by April 2003, can be obtained from Dr Beth Crisp on 0141 330 6425 or at b.crisp@socsci.gla.ac.uk. The project team would also be delighted to receive any written information, such as conference papers or programme documentation which teaching and learning of assessment in social work and social care education. This can be forwarded to:

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