

A review of successful project approaches to embedding innovation into institutional teaching and learning practices in higher education.

Evaluation methodology

The LTSN Generic Centre funded the preparation of a study to draw out lessons learned from a number of national projects that were funded by the UK higher education funding programmes over 1998-2002. The projects selected as part of the review were generic or interdisciplinary, technology-related educational development working at institutional and multi-institutional levels. The projects were predominantly TLTP phase 3 projects, but also include three ScotCIT projects and one FDTL phase 3 project that incorporates a significant ICT element.

A literature review was undertaken to identify existing knowledge in this area and consider relevant research in institutional change. Project reports and evaluation studies were reviewed and project staff were interviewed. A consultation exercise was conducted with representatives of national funding bodies and support organisations to explore the findings and identify areas at funding and programme levels for enhancing the effectiveness of projects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review was undertaken to identify experiences across the sector and consider relevant research in institutional change. This was used to inform the evaluation framework for the study and identify an appropriate question structure.

PROJECT REPORTS & MATERIALS

Reports and evaluation by the projects themselves were reviewed to extract commonalities and differences in the factors that projects felt were influential in their success in bringing about changes in teaching and learning practices.

Data was collected specifically concerning:

- funding details
- organisation and management
- project structure and activities
- culture, collaboration and networks
- strategies, approaches and methods for embedding learning technologies
- importance of the operational context
- experiences of implementation
- roles, expertise and infrastructure
- staff development and continuing professional development
- engaging stakeholders and institutional change
- rewards and incentives in project work

- indicators of impact and embedding
- impact on student learning experiences
- evidence of sustained changes in teaching practices
- role of national organisations and support

Annual reports, final reports and evaluation reports were reviewed for each of the ten projects (appendix 1: projects and documentation reviewed).

INTERVIEWS WITH PROJECT STAFF

Interviews were conducted with 17 staff in total drawn from across the ten projects. These were project directors, project managers and project officers (e.g. educational developers), many of who remained in post within the institution in which the project was based. These were predominantly conducted by telephone with one or two face-to-face interviews were held.

Question structure

- Background to the project and funding initiative supporting the project
- Location of the project and partners involved
- Methods used to develop the project - survey, observation, focus group, action research, workshops, web presence, roundtable etc.
- Out-reach activity (to influence developments in other institutions and beyond)
- In-reach activity (to embed project in institution)
- Legacy (ideas, case studies, materials, tools, resources, expertise, research knowledge)
- Dissemination, evaluation, further developments/funding.

The question sheet to support interviews is provided in appendix 2.

CONSULTATION WITH NATIONAL BODIES

Nationally funded projects in higher education have had variable success in embedding their outcomes into institutional practices. The purpose of the consultation process was to explore where such embedding has been successful and raise potential areas for enhancement in terms of national funding and support mechanisms.

A focus group approach was used to investigate operational contexts for educational development in UK HE and to consider those areas that relate to national policy, funding and support to projects, and to institutions. The event drew in representatives of UK HE funding councils, national development programmes and national support organisations (appendix 3).

The focus group structure and discussions were based on:

- An initial brainstorming exercise

In your professional experience, what is the best example of successful embedding that you have come across?

- Frameworks for national funding and support

1. *What do you feel work well to assist projects?*
2. *What in your experiences should be improved?*
3. *What in your view ought to change (maybe radically!)?*

A consultation paper was produced as a result of discussions and suggestions. While the review incorporates the experiences of those working on projects and in the institutions in which those projects were based, the consultation paper presents the collective views of representatives of national bodies. The exercise aimed to assist in (i) informing national policy and service groups, (ii) developing future funding programmes and, (iii) enhancing the guidance and support provided by funding councils, programmes and agencies to projects and to institutions.

Key areas were extracted from the discussions that UK funding councils, funding programmes and support bodies might take forward in future development.

Appendix 1

Projects, documentation, reports and materials reviewed

TELRI	Final project report Institutional readiness analysis questionnaire Change management framework
ASTER	Final project report ASTER Report, August 2000
SoURCE	Learning technology: institutional audit tools, Report to JCALT for distribution to all UK HEIs Embedding Learning Technologies strategically: culture, infrastructure & expertise Final project report The SoURCE Evaluation Report
TALENT	Final project report Book of TALENT: CHANGING your institution Book of TALENT: changing YOUR INSTITUTION
EFFECTS	Final project report The EFFECTS Evaluation Framework : a transferable model for collaborative projects Year 2 annual report External evaluation report
ELEN ANNIE	Final project report Overview of ANNIE Project Success Factors External evaluation report (draft initial findings)
ELICIT NetCulture	Needs Analysis Survey Briefing Paper: Frameworks for staff development in C&IT in learning and teaching
SESDL	Staff Development Consultancy Report
ScotCIT	Programme report: Achievements, Outcomes and Recommendations (Jan 02)
Tavistock Institute	Synthesis of TLTP3 annual reports: 1999 Synthesis of TLTP3 annual reports: 2000

Appendix 2

Question sheet to support telephone interview

Name:

Contact details:

Project:

Institution:

Lead site?:

Preamble:

Introduction to current project – short study on embedding of project outcomes into institutional practice.

Please talk as freely as you can, but bear in mind that the findings of this study will be in the public domain and will inform a consultation paper to the HE funding bodies.

First some facts for clarification:

Where is/was the home of the project.

What is/was your role in the project and what is now your role in the institution?

Would you say that the project consortium worked mostly as:

- a collaborative effort,
- in parallel within a shared framework or
- centralised with a strong lead on the development side from the lead institution?

What activities/approaches were used by the project to influence developments in other institutions? And what activities or approaches were used to influence and embed developments within own institution?

Which of the project intended outcomes do you feel were best met? (do you want me to refresh your memory as to what these were?)

I'd like now to ask a couple of questions about the project in relation to your institutional context ...

What would you say was the legacy of the project within your institution?

(further initiatives – internally or externally funded,
retention of expertise,
course materials and tools
case studies
research knowledge
student experience, e.g. retention, motivation, achievement, satisfaction)

Would you say that the project outcomes were now part of the “mainstream” in your institution? Where has there been strategic impact?

(nature of top-down support for the project?
influence on institutional mission?
effect on key strategies, e.g. e-learning?
new support units set up?
professional development of academic staff, technical staff?
Rewards and incentives for research & development of this kind?
Collaborations and networks within the institution?)

There have undoubtedly been major developments in relation to hardware/networking/software availability and accompanying support for staff and students since the project began – how might this have made a difference to your project if these had been in place earlier?

What do you feel could be done/have been done to assist institutional embedding?

By the project itself?
Senior management or other central units in your institution?
the funding body?