



Flexible Learning Leaders 2004-05

Final Report

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FINAL REPORT

1. Outputs and Outcomes

1.1 Formed links with schools:

Member of an International Leadership Institute group composed of principals, senior teachers, and educationalists from Singapore, South Africa, England, and New Zealand looking at learner centred education.

Have budgeted for and propose to invite a teacher from Aberdeen Primary School to demonstrate the use of a “smartboard” for a postgraduate engineering project to facilitate mentoring.

Have planned to set up a “schoodle” site for one of the AUT environmental studies lecturers to be contacted as the “expert” for a classroom project run at Aberdeen primary school. Have obtained verbal consent and interest from all parties concerned.

1.2 Encouraged collaboration across tertiary sector:

Organised and held a 3 day digital storytelling workshop at AUT taught by TUANZ e-Vision which was largely for AUT staff but was opened up to fellow FLLinNZer's, other interested staff from The Universities of Auckland and Waikato, Wintec and Best training.

Hosted visits by three Australian colleagues namely, Vicki Marchant, and Debbie Soccio who are Australian Flexible Learning Leaders, and Anna Gemmell, a librarian from the Australian TAFE sector. These visitors spoke to or gave presentations to AUT staff from Education, Occupational Therapy, Library and the Centre for Educational Professional Development depending on their backgrounds and areas of interest.

Hosted visits from two other FLLinNZ colleagues, namely Derek Chirnside and Lyn Smith. Helped set up a visit by Merrolee Penman to the School of Occupational Therapy at AUT and Irina Elgort's visit to the Centre of Educational Professional Development at AUT.

Collected resources for AUT staff from other institutions encouraging them to use them in their own teaching or to contact staff from other institutions who are involved in similar initiatives.

Promoted the “Programme Preview” concept at the Waikato e-learning Show-and-Share seminar.

Participating in a pilot for the Library learning objects repository project. Have demonstrated that the flash multimedia objects designed for the science laboratories can be modified for the engineering workshops without any further flash programming. If these can be housed in a repository in the Library, they can be linked to and reused by many people.

Looked at various aspects of collaboration across the education sector, specifically, the cluster model in New Zealand Schools, the Library Consortium in New Zealand, AUT's Memorandum of Understandings with other tertiary providers, the Sloan Foundation in the USA, the Community College Network in the USA, and the Scholars programme in Scotland.

Promotion of a workshop to be presented by Professor Arthur Frank, an expert in narrative inquiry from the University of Calgary, Canada on 13 and 14 July 2005 through the FLLinNZ network on "Narrative Inquiry: Selves, Experience and Story".

1.3 Developed leadership in e-learning:

Gained an understanding of the situation and issues relating to the promotion and usage of e-learning in the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, and New Zealand.

Developed an understanding on how 'electronic' learning, whether online or mobile can be used to teach programmes collaboratively across the country and eventually to facilitate 'personalised learning'.

2. Chronological account of travel, conferences, workshops etc. outside AUT.

2.1 Joseph Levine's five weeks online workshop: "Teaching at a Distance: From Concept to Practice", October 3 – November 6

This was a well designed and facilitated workshop demonstrating the strategies that were being advocated. There was participation from distant educators from around the world and it was a good starting point to see the status of online and distance education globally. I gained an understanding of the problems and issues that face some students from technical to physical and hence the necessity for distance education in some cases. I also came across some new tools using artificial intelligence to facilitate helpdesks and even discussion boards. Even though I still have no experience of these, it gave me an appreciation of the direction distance and online education was heading in some areas.

2.2 E-fest 2004 Wellington, New Zealand: October 11 - 13

This conference covered a range of presentations from the use of gaming technology, open source software, and e-learning standards to staff development. It was a good event to attend to gain an understanding into the technological and pedagogical thinking behind e-learning in New Zealand.

2.3 League of Innovations Tampa, Florida: November 8 – 10

This conference was run by the Community College network in the USA. The League "*is a catalyst in the community college field, an organization dedicated to bringing resources, innovations and ideas your way.*" The conference was presented using the traditional forums, round table discussions and hands-on laboratories. It catered for a large audience and I found the round table

discussions and the hands-on laboratories particularly useful. I saw some interesting demonstrations of technology, which included: 3D Holo-projections, ALICE, free software where students can learn object orientated programming by creating 3D interactive and animated virtual worlds. All the participants were very willing to share their knowledge, experiences and resources and it seemed to me to be a good model of collaboration in a fast, technologically changing world.

2.4 International Conference on Asynchronous Learning Networks, Orlando, Florida: November 12 – 14

This conference was preceded by workshops that were well facilitated and allowed for much interaction and exchange of ideas. It was apparent that the issues that are faced in New Zealand are identical to ones in the USA regarding staff development and adoption of new technologies. The conference sessions consisted of round table discussions and formal presentations of numbers of up to 20 – 30 people. There were many good and useful examples of collaboration across campuses, a team approach to teaching, and online communication.

2.5 Flexible Learning Leaders Australian final workshop, Sydney: December 9 – 10

This was a huge event with 64 leaders presenting. It was of particular interest to us New Zealanders to see what was going to be expected of us and also to see what our Australian counterparts were doing and which ones we could visit and make contact with. The projects ranged from mobile learning, learning object, indigenous students to staff development and also covered the spectrum of flexible learning. More communication with the Australian leaders will happen now that the project is finished and as different challenges and projects come to AUT.

2.6 Knowtips online conference: February 23 - 27

This was my first experience of a synchronous online conference and it was not a very good one. I found the pace of some of the interactions too fast to benefit from and quite exhausting. It was run from Canada and the time difference presented a few problems. I probably only reached the social interaction stage and was not able to take advantage of the high quality facilitators that were lined up.

2.7 Learning-Centred Leadership Institute, Waikato University: March 7 – 11

The presenters of this event emphasised that this was an INSTITUTE and not a CONFERENCE. There was representation from the full range of the education sector from kindergarten to tertiary, and from England, South Africa, Singapore and New Zealand. We were placed at tables of eight delegates and we worked in these groups through-out the week. We had representation from the different countries and the range of the education sector on each table. We were introduced to the 'dialogue' format of

communication and were encouraged to adopt this at our tables. We began by defining learning at our representative organisations and went on to look at learner-centredness. We envisaged and planned what a learner-centred institute would look and feel like and at my table at least we came to the conclusion that in such an organisation, the pivotal relationships would have to be ones of mentoring. We concluded that mentoring was the most powerful way to enhance performance and the most significant activity of a leader. This was a turning point for me in my project and I had not realised the full significance of this until very recently.

2.8 School visits, Waikato Region: March 14 – 17

The Leadership Institute was followed by school visits where learning centeredness was being practiced. I went to four schools in total, an intermediate, two primary schools and a kindergarten. The intermediate and primary schools had at least one digital classroom. The children seemed to prefer learning using computers, however professional development for the teachers was at about the same as for tertiary educators.

Having a science background, I was particularly interested in the fact that the schools were struggling with providing the full range of science subjects and yet the children were hungry to learn. In one school where the children were allowed to pick a topic to research, they chose things like; plastic surgery, cancer, nutrition, heart disease and other subjects related to their own or their families bodies. In another school where inquiry learning was the philosophy, the research topic one class had chosen was, to 'design a drink' and for the following semester, 'environmental issues'. No one teacher at school can be expected to satisfy the thirst for knowledge that these youngsters have and hence the idea for setting up a site where the children could 'Ask an expert' arose.

The other most striking outcome of my visit was the personal revelation that as you went down the education system the more learner-centred the organisation became. At the kindergarten for example, the children were allowed to choose what they learned, how they learned and when they learned. They had a wide range of activities available to them from playing in the sand-pit, to learning to add on the computer, and they went from one to another as it suited them. They came together for a 'sing-song' at the very end just before the parents came to collect them. The staff kept a 'learning story' for them which they treasured and had access to for showing off to whoever was willing to listen particularly the parents.

It was then that it became apparent that I as only able to do this in my own study during my PhD and even then the project had been pre-determined to some extent by the project supervisor and the funding organisation. The FLLinNZ project was therefore my first example of constructivism learning.

2.9 Computer-Aided Learning '05, Bristol, England: April 4 – 6

This conference was mainly aimed at the school sector and had many innovative teachers from schools presenting. There was a lot of show-and-

tell, but for me the most interesting presentations were where tertiary staff had been working with teachers to research their practice in the use of ICT in teaching. A good example of this was one study where they were comparing the use of ICT in different subject areas such as music, languages, science and mathematics. This was a good model that could be adopted in New Zealand.

2.10 Ultralab, Chelmsford, England: April 7

Ultralab are involved in very exciting and innovative projects. These range from 'Not-School' to 'digital storytelling' to 'Ultraversity'. I was really impressed with the staffs' enthusiasm about their work and their willingness to share. They had a history of being leaders in the use of technology and had an interesting archive of the different projects the organisation had been involved with in the past. Among some of the things I was shown was a video-clip of a country school in England which had primary to teenage children being taught in the same classroom with a mentoring model in place.

This was when the concept of a 'vertical classroom' at the tertiary level, and an enhanced interest in mentoring developed. At tertiary we have always seen the value of postgraduate students taking part in undergraduate laboratory demonstrating and tutoring but have never taken this principle through to our undergraduate teaching. The idea behind the 'vertical classroom' was that first, second and third year undergraduate students would be taught together in the same class with the teaching staff mentoring the third years, the third years mentoring the second years and so on. I foresee these mentoring relationships working in two ways. The younger students would always be more adept at using new teaching technologies and could help the ones higher up and especially the staff, and the content knowledge and experiences would come from top down. I realise that this would be big shift from our present method of teaching but if implemented carefully, I think would act as a catalyst for moving to a more learning-centred and technologically enhanced mode of education.

2.11 Scholars Programme, Interactive University, Edinburgh, Scotland: April 18 – 19

This was an example of a high quality resource designed by Heriott-Watt (in the first instance) and now being promoted by the Interactive University. It consisted of a well designed and highly interactive content that school children and their teachers could have access to for the study of Scottish Advanced Highers and Higher National qualifications which are awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). All the local authorities in Scotland had registered for the programme and so it was available to all the schools. The resource provided content which the teachers could incorporate into their teaching and even had a discussion board through which students could ask questions of the staff back at the interactive university. There was a well developed quality enhancement strategy in place and it was very apparent that the staff were committed to updating and evaluating the material. I thought the pedagogical approach adopted was appropriate for the

audience and purpose, ie instructivist, and the use of technology was carefully selected and appropriate for a web-based resource with its limitations.

2.12 Leading Learning Through Professional Learning Communities: presented by Louise Stoll, Waikato University: May 26

This one day workshop defined 'Learning Communities', how they can be developed, embedded and sustained. This is another structure that should be developed among the teaching staff in the tertiary sector in New Zealand, if we are going to be able to collaboratively teach degree programmes. This is a big shift in direction from being very competitive to being collaborative and will take time for the staff to start working together effectively and with good use of technology. In many ways this was a follow on to the leadership institute earlier on in the year.

2.13 Coaching and Mentoring workshop, University of Auckland University: June 14 – 15

This two day workshop was a well presented practical workshop which was supported by some well developed theoretical models. I had elected to enrol in this workshop after my realisation of the importance of mentoring. This workshop enabled me to see the power of mentoring from personal experience as well as from observing the mentoring process. It has enhanced my vision of the 'vertical classroom' in the tertiary sector and given me a new insight into how the mentoring process within this setting could work as a two-way process where the students mentor the staff with respect to the technology and the staff mentor the students with respect to subject knowledge and pedagogy.

2.14 Powerful Learning, West Auckland Education Centre: June 24 – 27

This is a conference scheduled for the end of June and is run locally by an education authority for schools. The programme includes sessions such as; 'Using inquiry as an innovative and imaginative learning tool', 'How to be a learning power coach', and 'Coaching creativity: Building students' power of imagination & ingenuity'. This promises to be a very enjoyable and fruitful conference and will give me a further insight into the directions innovative teachers are taking.

3. Benefits

The most significant benefit from the FLLinNZ year for me personally was that it consolidated my vision for e-learning by giving me insight into the strategies already in place which would help to bring it to pass. It also provided me with a new vision for education and learning as a whole and put me in contact with like-minded thinkers around the world.

The department I am based in has benefited from the most current information about the latest technological tools being used in other parts of the country as well as from around the world. I have been able to inform them of practices and strategies used by other institutions that could be considered

for AUT. We have had several visitors as a direct result of FLLinNZ and staff have been able to share knowledge and experiences.

The University staff have benefited from the input from Australian and New Zealand flexible learning leaders visits. I have been able to bring back and distribute resources to several staff members from the conferences and visits I have undertaken as part of FLLinNZ. I have still more resources to shared and will be able to do so in the coming six months or so. Also, over the next little while, I intend to organise and host several of the other members of the FLLinNZ project to share their findings with the staff and management at AUT as appropriate. I have already been able to introduce some of the other leaders to different AUT staff with the view to inviting them to visit or to share their findings in other ways.

4. Communicating and Leading

I have been able to discuss my learning with interested staff at AUT and people I have met during my visits in schools and organisations overseas. I have been invited to share some findings at the faculty level at AUT next month and intend on starting up a regular forum for sharing ideas and innovations. I have started a weblog for sharing some of my ideas and findings on flexible learning as well as the post-cards on the FLLinNZ site.

As one of the FLLinNZ alumni, I will be able to share my thoughts and findings with the other members as well as the future leaders. I think this will be a powerful network and the present leaders will have more time for sharing and discussing issues and resources with the community in the near future.

I would like to present at formal conferences where appropriate and visit other organisations both in the tertiary and school sectors.

5. Organisational Influence

To date the biggest influence on flexible learning has been in the Library which is very important if initiatives from the faculties are going to be successful. . Below is a direct quote from one of the learning services co-ordinators at AUT.

“Flexible Learning has given the Library the opportunity to extend its resources and services, that is, making much of it's collections accessible to students and staff off-campus. Much of what the Library acquires for students' learning requirements is now in electronic format as opposed to print - at present, the Library subscribes to approximately 3,000 print serial titles, while subscribing to approx 30,000 electronic serial titles!

Flexible Learning has added another dimension to the role of the Library at AUT and has changed its users' perception of what it has to offer; with its electronic resources - be it, online journals, e-books, e-reserves (e-copies of book chapters, reports etc) etc, e(nquiry) service, online information literacy tutorial and Flexible Delivery services for distance students

AUT lecturers and administrators involved in Flexible Learning, such as you, have given the librarians the opportunity to implement and promote these

services above. We look forward to further collaboration with staff involved in this ever-evolving teaching and learning practice.”

There is much work still to be done in the faculties especially with the teaching staff. This was recognized when two staff from AUT were successful in our applications to the FLLinNZ project last year and my position changed being the ‘Flexible Learning Advisor’ for two faculties to being full-time in one. Peter Mellow, the other successful applicant was appointed as the ‘Flexible Learning Advisor’ for the other faculty until the end of 2005. This is reflected in the quote below from AUT’s flexible learning Strategic Plan..

“Leader in e-pedagogy

AUT’s adoption of a learning management system resulted in a re-consideration of how information technologies enhance teaching. AUT adopted a strategy of employing flexible learning advisors to assist staff use new information and communications technologies in their teaching. In addition, faculties created flexible learning advisory committees to support flexible learning advisors and provide a venue for staff to share e-learning experiences with each other. One result of adopting this strategy has been the conduct of “FLEX IT” sessions where staff from around the university can exchange ideas and experiences. This strategy will be expanded beyond AUT. Two of AUT’s flexible learning advisors received national awards and recognition for their leadership in this area.”

The faculty structure at AUT has undergone a change which was implemented at the beginning of 2005 and so I am now the Flexible Learning Advisor for the Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies, which includes the Schools of Art & Design, Engineering, Mathematical Sciences, Communication Studies, and Computer and Information sciences. I think this is a really good mix of knowledge and skills particularly for promoting flexible learning. The new faculty has a large number of innovative people and practices, and promises to be an exciting place to be working. This grouping of schools has allowed me to extend my leadership in flexible learning. The faculty is already in the process of establishing a committee for Learning and Teaching which will feed into AUTs’ newly formed committee structure.

6. The Future

- collaborative teaching of courses and programmes across the tertiary sector
- Adoption of m-learning
- Tertiary input into the teaching/inspiring of students in the school sector
- E-learning facilitated personalised life-long learning
- ‘Vertical classrooms’ where first, second and third year undergraduates are taught together with a 2-way mentoring relationship between the staff and the students.