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Appendix 6: A Commentary on the Change Models and Processes Proposed in the two Institutional CETLs, Abbi Flint, June 2007.

Commentary on the change models and processes proposed in the two institutional CETL bids.

This short paper comments on the change models and processes proposed in the final bid documents for the CPLA and E³I CETLs and some of the issues and questions these may raise, informed by some of the literature around cultural change and focused reading of the bid documents. As this commentary is based only on the bid documents themselves it provides baseline data on the approaches to change: the bids were written almost two years ago and the CETLs will have progressed considerably. The aim of this paper is not to give recommendations of future actions, but to provide a basis for discussion that can be used to reflect on how the CETLs have progressed in comparison with the models originally put forward in the bid. It may be useful in thinking about how the models, processes and structures have been manifested in practice, how and why they have changed, and how these would be articulated now. Many of the issues raised in this commentary may well have been addressed but it may be useful to think about how the strengths identified could be built upon, and how some of the challenges raised may be approached. It is perhaps worth noting that as thinking on cultural change is contextual and continuously developing, this should be seen as a snapshot commentary at a specific point in time, rather than a comprehensive review of the bids.

Language used in the bids

In addition to looking at the processes and structures involved in the change models proposed in the bids, the language used to describe the CETLs was also considered. The use of language can be a powerful tool in communicating change, in particular the use of metaphors can provide a frame of reference for people to understand change within (Akin and Palmer, 2000), and allow change to be seen in a novel way which may facilitate creativity (Davison, Boswood and Martinsons, 2004). However, the new and creative understandings the use of metaphors facilitates will only be partial, as while a metaphor may highlight a particular interpretation it will also obscure others:

"Metaphor is inherently paradoxical, as the way of seeing created through metaphor becomes a way of not seeing". (Morgan, 1998: 6).

As using a single metaphor may obscure certain interpretations, it may be appropriate to utilise multiple metaphors (Akin and Palmer, 2000). Metaphors used can be drawn from within the organisation or institution itself, or provided as a novel way of seeing a situation by a change agent or leader. Although metaphors may allow richer understandings, and may lead to other useful metaphors, those using them need to guard against over extending or using inappropriate metaphors and acknowledge that their use can also lead to distortions, bias, and over-complicated and ambiguous interpretations (Morgan, 1998; Akin and Palmer, 2000). When used effectively they can increase engagement, be inclusive and provide new visions or realities, but they can also lead to alienation, trivial restating of the obvious, cynicism and mistrust (Illes and Ritchie, 1999). Metaphors are best treated as way of communicating and understanding change which may then lead to transformation, rather than an instrument of transformation itself (Illes and Ritchie, 1999).

Following the example described in Davison, Boswood and Martinsons (2004), where three strategic planning documents from a university were analysed for their use of metaphor, the bid documents were also read with an eye to the language and metaphors used. Multiple metaphors were present in both bid documents and the images that these evoke, and how this reflects the approach to change, are incorporated in this commentary.

Common issues

First or second order change?

One of the key questions from reading the bids is what kind of change are the CETLs aiming to achieve? Bate (1998) makes a distinction between first and second order change, which are also described as cultural maintenance and development (essentially "trying to do what you do best, better - and more often" (ibid: 35)) and cultural transformation and discontinuity (actually making a change). Cultural development is characterised by quantitative, continuous incremental change *within* the existing cultural framework, with an emphasis on cultural stability. Transformational change tends to involve qualitative, discontinuous step-changes *of* the culture itself, with an emphasis on doing something different (ibid). Obviously these aren't mutually exclusive, the 'both-and' approach tends to be more successful than the 'either-or' approach (ibid), but emphasis may be placed on one or the other at particular points in time.

From the detail within the bid documents both CETLs seem to place more emphasis on cultural development: looking for examples of good practice within the University, developing those further and using those as examples for dissemination and wider adoption. Both bids have clear criteria for identifying what constitutes excellent or good practice (Employability Framework and Learner Autonomy Protocol) and the models used (transference between individual champions for E³I, and transference between module, course and subject teams for CPLA) have at their core a process of scaling up. This gradual scaling up is represented in both of the bids as an incremental rather than a discontinuous process.

Developing rather than changing culture has some obvious benefits: it doesn't alienate people's previous experiences and as it involves incremental change it can be perceived as less threatening. However, a cultural development approach does have limitations when dealing with innovative changes, and may not accommodate the necessary flexibility and creativity. Even if initiatives imply cultural transformation they can be translated and constrained within the framework of the existing culture: "effectively deprived of their impact and novelty" (Bate, 1998: 92).

In the context of the CETLs there is a fine balance to be struck on working with existing structures and not adapting so much that the impact of the innovation is compromised. Both the CETLs aim to align with the underlying infrastructure of the University through membership and representation of key departments on CETL working groups and teams, through dialogue to inform and draw from existing strategies, and through working with existing structures and processes such as course planning and quality review. This is obviously key for the success and sustaining of the work of the CETLs, but by aligning with the infrastructure they are taking more of a cultural development than a cultural transformation approach.

Who will communicate and disseminate CETL initiatives?

Who is communicating the CETL activities and aims will greatly influence the wider roll-out and impact of the CETLs. Both CETLs have closed membership of core teams with many members chosen because of their good/innovative practice. Whilst innovators are necessary to develop the ideas and put these into practice, often involving risk-taking, these may not be the most effective group of people to use as communicators. For example, Rogers (2003) points out that innovators may be perceived to be deviant and therefore not necessarily someone people would take recommendations from to adopt ideas in practice: whilst they might acknowledge the good work of the innovator they may not be influenced by the innovator's experience to try the idea out themselves. Diffusion research supports the idea that people are more likely to adopt ideas, and put them into practice more quickly when they are communicated to them by someone like them

(Rogers, 2003). Since the University has varied local cultural contexts (e.g. particular subject cultures, groups of stakeholders etc) the person most likely to have influence may not be the same person, or even in the same role. Rogers (2003) describes the key people here as *Opinion Leaders*: individuals who are "able to influence informally other individuals' attitudes or overt behaviour in a desired way with relative frequency" (p.37).

Membership of CETL teams

As the membership of the CETL teams is closed it is clearly articulated who will be involved for the first couple of years (for E³I this is the previously identified and nominated champions, for CPLA this is invited participants). However, it isn't clear from the bids how that involvement will continue. For example, in E³I champions are involved for 2 years via mentoring, personal development and dissemination but it is not clear what will happen when this period is over. Within the structures and teams mentioned in the bids it is untenable that the CETL teams could accommodate continually increasing membership, but the process of debrief and exiting the formal structures is not clear. What happens to the champions after two years with E³I? What happens after a staff member has been seconded to CPLA for a year? There is a risk that some people may be involved with the CETL for a short period and then have no involvement, or may wish to extend their direct involvement for the length of the initiative. There need to be clearly articulated strategies for managing and co-ordinating the process by which participants exit the CETL, which do not result in alienation, but enable them to continue to engage with the CETL at an appropriate level. Extending the involvement of initial secondees and champions may limit the number of people who can engage directly with the CETLs.

The model of invitation or selection means that membership isn't completely inclusive. It's hard to see from the bids how a member of staff with little experience who wishes to develop could become part of the CETL teams.

Course-planning/validation

Both CETLs are aiming for an embedded rather than a 'bolt-on' approach. This is obviously essential for the sustainability of the CETLs but also has benefits in terms of making it relevant to more people as they can see how it directly impacts their practice.

Both of the bids describe course-planning and validation as foci for activity and alignment with the principles of Learner Autonomy and Employability. The E³I bid describes the focus on the 6 yearly cycle of validation as "ensuring engagement", and the CPLA bid focuses staff development activity around course planning. This has both benefits and limitations. It reinforces the embeddedness that is core to both bids and ensures the focus is at the course or programme level rather than at the individual module level. It also encourages dialogue between members of course teams on issues key to the CETLs. However, there may be limitations to how far this can impact on practice. Not everyone who teaches on a course will automatically be involved in course planning, so some members of the teaching team may not be involved in discussions. Furthermore, the level of impact will depend largely on individual course-team practices and there may not be time or space for appropriate discussion. Many issues have to be considered in the course planning process and are incorporated into documentation for revalidation. There is a sense that at busy times these issues may be perceived as "boxes to be ticked" and some of their impact may be lost.

Focusing activity at course planning and validation also reinforces the emphasis on developmental rather than transformative change, locating the change within existing institutional structures and perpetuating the view that this is the only time that change can be affected. A transformative approach would be to challenge these structures and to question whether the somewhat rigid and lengthy framework for change involved in these processes is capable of fostering the continuous reflection, refinement and improvisation to encourage innovation and creativity.

As both of the CETLs have chosen this area as a focus for activity there may be opportunity to combine and co-ordinate activities to reduce conflicting demands on course teams engaging with both CETLs

Rewards

The rewards for staff engaging with the CETLs are both personal and professional; including honoraria, secondments (time buy-out), event attendance, and CPD activity (leading to possible accreditation or awards). These ensure members have sufficient time and space to engage with the CETL and give a sense of prestige to belonging to the CETLs. The fact that members receive higher honoraria if they engage with one CETL individually (£1000) as opposed to as a team (£2000) could be seen as at dissonance with the focus of the CETLs on activity at the course team level, as it may be seen as discouraging collaborative approaches. In both bids the majority of rewards are aimed at academic staff, although the CPLA bid describes the importance of spreading rewards across all staff groups.

Both CETLs aim to link to other relevant work in this area through LTA Fellowships, TQEF projects etc. This is good as it removes the traditional project boundaries - linking work together through content rather than funding route. It also means that there is potential for impacts to be multiplied as different projects feed into one another. How this might work in practice is not clear, particularly around how the different funding and reporting requirements may work together, or whether any prioritisation for activity around the CETL themes will take place. This may be an area where a transformational approach could be considered.

Change as a journey

Both of the documents use imagery of journeys to describe the initiatives. The use of this imagery is useful in create a feeling of practical transformation and movement and, as shown in the variety of journey related imagery in the bids, allows the metaphor to be extended in creative ways to help think about how that transformation is achieved. For example, describing vehicles of change, and pathways and maps to achieving the change creates a strong sense of visualisation of a changed future. However, a journey can often be interpreted as a linear process with fixed start and finish points. For initiatives such as CETLs which will undoubtedly undergo considerable reiteration and non-linear development this may not be the most appropriate way of portraying the process. Furthermore, the idea of a specific end point, whilst very useful from a project planning perspective, may not adequately represent the sustained and embedded change that the CETLs aim to achieve.

E³

The bid describes itself as encouraging holistic and organic change. This is reflected in the use of natural imagery in the bid document: specifically allusions to horticulture: "budding student entrepreneurs" (10), "rooted in relevant literature" (1) and "in a way that can be grown organically" (3). However, this organic approach is not reflected in the main process for change described in the detail of the CETL bid: a cascading model utilising rolling champions. The initial four champions were identified prior to the CETL bid submission and will mentor new champions (4 each year) and development teams (32 each year). These are succeeded each year by the previous year's mentored champions.

The strengths of this model are that it draws from experiences from within SHU so uses local relevant examples and provides a mean for recognising and rewarding staff for their contribution to developing practice. However, there are also limitations. The champions are not self selected but are nominated (in this case initially by the Heads of LTA in the faculties) therefore this is not an open and inclusive model. Whilst in reality some self

nomination may occur, some potential champions may not be identified during this process, nor will those who are not "excellent" but have a drive to improve their practice. This also puts additional pressure on the Heads of LTA; the fact that they are selecting only one example from the whole of the faculty means that some of the evaluation of what constitutes 'excellence' in employability is being done at this level.

There is also a sense of hierarchy created by the rolling nature of the champion model, with 'elder' champions mentoring the next year's champions, and the identification of programmes as "excellent" and (the implicitly inferior) "good".

There is extensive use of sporting metaphors in E³I: with references to champions and goals and more specific allusions to "ambitious targets" (8) "a 'club' atmosphere" (15), "excellence-contender programmes" (4) and instruments associated with sporting activities such as "spurs" and "spearheads" (1,3). Prestige and pride imagery is also used in E³I with reference to "excellent programmes", strategies for rewarding staff including "ensur[ing] that secondees are released from normal duties" to give them "space away from daily distractions" (15). This imagery helps to establish a sense of status associated with the CETL, which may encourage staff to engage with CETL initiatives and places the emphasis on the positive outcomes and achievements that will hopefully be a result of the initiative. However, in any sport there will not only be winners but there will also be losers. By emphasising the excellence and status of those who are involved in the CETL there is a danger of creating distance between those who are directly involved in the project and the rest of the University, which may present difficulties when embedding the CETL's initiatives more widely across the University.

The use of an employability framework, criteria for excellence, toolkits and manuals reflect the focus on common understandings and values around employability. Whilst this integrative approach gives a clear vision of what is expected and accepted it may not accommodate the plurality inherent in university cultures, and could possibly lead to "calculative compliance" rather than real engagement (Bate, 1998).

Physical space

Part of the capital for E³I will be spent on dedicated CETL space at both city and collegiate campuses. This reinforces the importance placed on of the work of the CETL and gives the examples that will be showcased there a sense of status. It also means that there is a permanent space where people know they can find out about CETL activities. However, having a dedicated extra space for the CETL may unintentionally undermine the focus placed on embeddedness, giving the impression that it is something in addition to normal practice. The 'club' atmosphere that the bid describes this space providing may give a sense of membership but may also result in alienation or resentment from staff not involved with the CETL and reinforce any perceptions of an 'elite' or 'clique'. The fact that there is no dedicated space at Psalter Lane is in all likelihood due to future Estates Strategy, but it does mean there may be additional issues around inclusion of staff on this campus in the CETL.

CETL teams

The CETL bid describes the model used as both "bottom-up" driven and "top-down" facilitated and this is represented in the working groups within the CETL. The core CETL team is varied, represents a number of groups, and should provide a diverse skills set. However, the point raised earlier about how new members are incorporated means that it isn't clear how this team will continue to work - will new champions automatically join this team and will previous champions stop being involved?

The steering group consists mainly of high level management, possibly representing this "top-down" facilitation. However, this group may play a more involved role than facilitation as the bid also describes how the "strong management" lead will ensure that targets are

met. Alternative perspectives are incorporated through the involvement of the faculty Heads of LTA in the steering groups and key internal and external stakeholders in the Employability Forum. The way in which these groups interact is not made explicit in the bid and there is some overlapping of membership.

Outputs

Within the outputs there is a focus on tools, products and processes that can be used, for example, to monitor and identify excellence within employability. These are useful as they give tangible products from the CETL which can be used to enable people to see how they can practically engage with the CETL, and provide a means for the CETL to measure its own achievement. This is reinforced in the use of mechanistic metaphors in the E3I bid document making reference to "toolkits and self help manuals" available to staff (23). The appropriateness of using mechanistic metaphors in Higher Education Institutions is not clear. Morgan (1998) describes mechanistic models as working well when tasks are straightforward, the environment is stable, and fixed solutions are appropriate as the same product is required. They are not designed to incorporate innovation, can potentially block creativity and flexibility, and may not be able to deal with new and changing circumstances. It may be useful to consider whether this is an appropriate representation for the nature of change the CETL aims to accomplish.

Provision of "toolkits" could also be interpreted as implying that existing practice needs "fixing", and may therefore be seen as a deficit model. This also appears to reflect the champion led model to a certain extent: expertise is distilled in the toolkits and manuals to enable others, with implied less expertise, to implement in practice. The focus on toolkits and manuals may also affect the way that people engage with the CETL, and it may be useful to ask whether using the manuals and tools will result in a deeper engagement with the importance of employability within the curriculum at an intellectual level, or whether it could result in adoption as a means of compliance. Although the model used by the CETL utilises internal champions the bid seems very outward looking. A number of external networks are used and the impact on different groups of external stakeholders is articulated. However, there is a feeling that the wider impact of the CETL within staff in SHU is not well developed. For example, more elements of the communication strategy are aimed at external stakeholders compared with internal staff and student groups. Furthermore, in terms of purpose of communication, more elements are described as PR than for dissemination and evaluation: does this accurately reflect the priorities of the CETL?

CPLA

The model described in the bid appears to be very flexible but not that clearly articulated. This has both benefits and drawbacks. The fact that it is flexible and can be adapted to particular contexts may encourage people to take the ideas on board. Rogers (2003) describes how "[a] national survey of innovation in public schools found that when an educational innovation was re-invented by a school, its adoption was more likely to be continued" (p.177). So allowing adaptation may increase ownership, commitment and active participation in the change process. However, it may also mean that the project team have little control over how it is adapted which may mean that some adaptation isn't in line with the broader project aims, and may be harder to evaluate or monitor.

The different approaches articulated in the model imply a pluralistic approach, recognising and accommodating some of the different cultural forms within the University. This is reflected in some of the language used in the bid: talking about "different traditions of working together" (CPLA, 12), and in the provision of non-prescriptive material to enable other institutions to consider how they might implement similar changes (CPLA, 14). However, there may be some conflict with the use of a single protocol to identify and monitor change internally at the course level and identify areas needing support. Whilst

this provides some clarity around how people may work with the CETL and gives them something tangible to work with it is important this does not oversimplify the process, or miss identification of unintended outcomes and opportunities.

The model uses principles of peer-supported development and mentoring. This echoes other activity within SHU around Peer Supported Review (ELATE project). This can be very successful and encourages a model of collegiality and community within the CETL rather than hierarchical relationships. As previously mentioned, Rogers (2003) indicates that ideas are more likely to catch on if communicated by similar people therefore this may also impact on adoption and engagement rates. However, the exact nature of the support or mentoring processes used is not made explicit in the bid.

Physical space

There is no particular dedicated CETL space planned but capital will be spent on refurbishments of teaching and learning spaces, to facilitate innovative practice, and provision of technology for students to facilitate their involvement. This means that the CETL can have sustained impact on learning and teaching environments outside of a designated CETL space.

There is a slight conflict here with some of the language used in the bid itself which may give an impression of CETL activity having a focused physical location. Whilst both the bids contained references to construction metaphors, through descriptions of building on knowledge and practices, and University infrastructures, the CPLA bid extends this imagery much further.

"...build a national centre for learner autonomy" (CPLA, 25)

"Sheffield Hallam becomes 'the place' for valuing personal contributions to learning..." (CPLA, 23)

This imagery is useful in creating a physical image of how the CETLs will impact the institutions and are therefore useful in making the outcomes and processes tangible and understandable. However, the imagery may serve to constrain CETL activity as it locates it in a discrete physical space. There may also be an element of using subject specific terminology; this may make the initiative appear relevant and understandable to people within that discipline but may alienate those outside it.

Outputs

Although the processes and models used to achieve change are not clearly articulated in the bid document there are **three specific outputs** described which may be read as three different models. The flexibility provided by multiple models means that it may be possible to tailor approach to particular contexts. However it isn't clear how much choice participants have over this - if they have a choice then this could result in a greater sense of ownership and empowerment and therefore deeper engagement with the CETL.

The **first output** focuses on developing specific courses, continuing the development via external networks and then bringing that back to the University. The strengths of this model are that it provides a focus for the course team, students may see bigger impacts than if it was done on an individual module basis, and it may allow a more holistic approach that builds on learning throughout the course. The initial focus on courses with a strong track record in autonomy is described as increasing buy-in from staff and students, but it is not clear how this can reduce student resistance outside of that course. The use of external subject centres to further develop the course provides an opportunity for feedback as part of an open, rather than closed, cycle. What this output does not address is what happens when students take modules outside of the course structure, especially those in other disciplines. This could create dissonance and confusion over expectations, but those expectations could also be a pressure for transformational change in those modules (similar to how student expectations were a driver for change in adoption of the

VLE). This perhaps creates an opportunity to use the disciplines that these modules come from as possible subject pairings used in output two.

The **second output** is to develop a model for learner autonomy across subject pairings. This assumes that models will be transferable between the subject pairings chosen so carries a certain level of risk. The choice of the pairings is not made clear but the bid does state that this will start with subjects with established good practice. This could create some resistance or resentment if pairings are with subjects without this track record, as they may perceive it as a hierarchical rather than collegial relationship. There is considerable importance placed in the bid on working across disciplinary boundaries, which has the potential to facilitate sharing and strengthen relationships between subjects. But there is an element of conflict between pairing subjects for sharing models, and the fact that staff development is described in the bid as subject based. The staff development literature indicates that discipline based development may be more successful than generic development within a cross disciplinary context (e.g. Healey and Jenkins, 2003), so there may be benefits for having the discipline focus here. The focus on course planning elsewhere in the bid also implies working within discipline areas. It may be helpful to articulate which activities are subject based and which cut across disciplines.

The **third output** is the transfer of models between levels within the same discipline, particularly between undergraduate and postgraduate levels. As this is subject based it may bring together people with common understandings of course content etc. However, there may be considerable differences in the make-up of the student cohorts which could make transferability of the models difficult. For example, if the postgraduate courses have a large percentage of international students these may have different expectations and experiences of autonomy compared with undergraduates. Furthermore, where employers or professional bodies are involved in postgraduate courses there may be specific requirements which make the transference of models from undergraduate courses problematic.

The involvement of students throughout the planning, implementation, evaluations and dissemination not only embodies the principles of learner autonomy, but also creates engaging personal accounts for staff and students to see in practice. But more clarity is needed on how possible staff resistance to student involvement could be addressed.

CETL teams

The core team is made up of relatively senior staff (lowest grade PL). Whilst this represents considerable knowledge and expertise it may have an impact on how the CETL is perceived by colleagues, possibly that involvement is dependent on experience/status. The bid describes how the core team will involve 9 professors promoting Learner Autonomy by 2010: it may be useful to consider whether these members are appropriate *Opinion Leaders* for disseminating practice in different contexts.

The development team is a larger team so may address some of the concerns above (giving a larger group of people who may disseminate practice). However, for the first two years of the project involvement in this group is by invitation only meaning that this is not open, inclusive membership.

The CETL also has Leadership, Operational, Steering and International Advisory Groups. The Steering Group is mainly made up of senior management but appears very light touch (a "critical friend" function). There are a lot of groups working here and there is considerable overlapping membership. What isn't clear in the bid is the relationship between the groups and their responsibilities

What next?

The aim of this paper is not to provide a critique of the change models and processes in the two institutional CETL bids, but to provide commentary and interpretation from a cultural change perspective.

It is hoped that the considered distance inherent in this commentary will be a useful starting point to reflect on the development of the CETLs so far and think about future development. Now that various CETL activities are underway it may be useful to look at whether the approaches to change described in the bids have changed, and how these reflect the overall aims of the CETLs. In particular, reflecting on the actual implementation over the past seven months, and how this might impact future implementation plans:

- How would the change models and processes be articulated now?
- In what way are the new approaches more effective/appropriate than those described in the bid documents?
- Do they address some of the issues and challenges raised in this paper?
- What impact does the approach to change have on the 'bigger picture' - the overall direction of the CETL?

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