

EFFECTS Transferability Funding Project

Final External Evaluation

'EFFECTS started as a project and became a network'

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Transferability Project

The 1999 external evaluation of EFFECTS begins with a description of the project as, 'a call to arms' which has resulted in, 'changed teaching practice at institutions across the UK on a scale that may well be unmatched within this particular funding regime.' (Harvey J 1999 Pg. 2). It finished with a range of recommendations focused around the further dissemination and further development of the gains made by the project, particularly those linked to the original objective of building a network of professional C&IT developers in UK HE.

The transferability project then had 2 aims both linked to these recommendations in an attempt to explore ways in which EFFECTS could 'live on' as its funding came to an end:

- To further analyse and disseminate the outcomes of the EFFECTS and SoURCE TLTP3 projects so as to produce a coherent resource to support learning technology development and use in institutions.
- To develop networks of learning technology specialists who can transfer the collated outcomes into their own institutional learning technology practices, especially (but not exclusively) through staff development programmes, and can contribute to the ongoing development of the resource framework.

1.2 The evaluation of EFFECTS

As Harvey (ibid. pg2) noted in her 1999 report, evaluation has been embedded within the project from the outset and has provided a rich source of data on both the process of conducting effective impact evaluation and the products produced through EFFECTS evaluation; case studies, snap shot studies and monitoring reports. (Oliver et al 1999; Phelps, Beetham and Conole SEDA 1999; Maier, P Warren, A, 2000).

1.3 The purpose of this evaluation

The purpose of this small-scale evaluation was to evaluate the project against the second aim above. As with Harvey's evaluation (ibid.), in practice the evaluation activities have been broader than simply reaching a judgement on levels of success (Somekh 2001). A key focus for example was to hear and record the lessons learned from those involved in developing the networks so as to inform those involved in future network building. The evaluation objectives, negotiated with the project team were to:

- Gather practitioner profiles of participants involved in the SEDA ELT programme
- Review a sample of the current SEDA Embedding Learning Technologies network members to hear how their courses were set up, how they are linked and how they came to the network
- Compare where possible their reasons for developing their programmes in their particular ways

- Compare networks set up through EFFECTS with others such as LTSN or FE ILT Champions
- Gather profiles from these networks with a view to collecting examples of good practice with regard to setting up and maintaining networks
- To review the outcomes of ELT portfolios particularly with regard to levels and methods of reflection

1.4 The structure of this report

The structure of this report is as follows:

Introduction

Methodology

Analysis of the data collected, using questions related to the evaluation objectives above but related to the three themes within the project aim:

- The development of networks of learning technology specialists
- The role of the networks in the transfer of collated outcomes to their own institutional practices
- The contribution of the networks to the ongoing development of a resource network

Summary discussion

Recommendations - these are for both for the project team and for members of the networks associated with EFFECTS that continue to live on.

2. Final Summative Evaluation

2.1 Introduction

Given the time scale for this evaluation, the project team agreed an evaluation plan to maximise a qualitative approach to data collection. The aim was to gather a range of 'stories' from participants involved in networks associated with EFFECTS and involved in other comparable networks to explore the factors involved in creating and developing an effective network. This would build on some of the data from the 1999 Harvey report (particularly 5.1.5 and 5.1.7).

In practice however the time scale was tight and the final evaluation objective to review the reflective aspect of participants' portfolios was dropped.

2.2 Methodology

The qualitative methodological approach aimed to build on the work of the 1999 report which highlighted the real value participants in EFFECTS had found in the network meetings (pg. 45) through narrative accounts of participants interviewed by the evaluator.

This narrative allowed for an attempt to uncover the social construction of stakeholders' experience of the networks using Stake's ideas (2003) of defining quality through, 'tracing back to how we are pleased, back to the origins of the experience.' He says that, *'quality doesn't exist until people declare it so. And people declare it when they are struck by the exquisite, moved by the encounter.'* He goes on to say that of course some people do not experience what others experience and thus a side of quality is hidden to them, however as evaluators, *'if most of the stakeholders do not experience the merit of the program, the program has less quality than if most do. The quality of a social venture needs to be seen partly as a function of the total experience of the stakeholders and partly as the experience of individuals and subgroups.'* (2003)

2.3 Data collection

2.3.1 Themes

In facilitating narrative accounts from the range of participants interviewed, three themes were followed, relating to the original aim of the project:

- The development of networks of learning technology specialists
- The role of these networks in the transfer of collated outcomes to their own institutional practices
- The contribution of the networks to the ongoing development of a resource network

2.3.2 Stories from Programme Leaders and a participant

Interviews were carried out with 5 programme leaders building upon the issues linked to the creation and sustaining of the EFFECTS network, raised in the 1999 report (Harvey 1999 Appendix 1 pg59). These interviews were aimed at facilitating stories from the project leaders on their experience of joining the network, using it and sustaining it. Further areas of discussion centred on their experience of other professional networks, including those which they may have set up internally through the ELT programme and the sharing of good practice within and across academic communities. One of the people interviewed had also been a participant on an ELT programme and thus he was additionally asked to recount his experience from this perspective.

The themes covered within these interviews are listed in Appendix 1.

The issues raised also assisted in identifying themes for discussion with participants of other comparative networks.

2.3.3 Stories from within the Project

Interviews were carried out with the original project manager and project officer again building upon the issues described above. These interviews were aimed at facilitating narrative accounts from within the project of the development, organisation and delivery of the EFFECTS networks. Suggestions for developing and sustaining networks and identifying how the sharing of good practice might be encouraged were also discussed.

The themes covered within these interviews are listed in Appendix 2

2.3.4 Stories from the network

A focus group of delegates to a national network meeting held at Coventry University further developed some of the emergent themes. The aim of the questions to the focus group was to elicit delegate accounts of how they became aware of the network, its value to them and factors which might make it more effective and sustainable.

The themes covered in the focus group discussion are listed in Appendix 3

2.3.5 Stories from other networks

Two representatives from other networks were interviewed (one with a key member of the LTSN BEST and one with a member of the M25 libraries network). In addition a small focus group at the SEDA Spring 2003 Conference also provided contributions on their experiences of belonging to national and local networks.

The themes covered within these interviews are listed in Appendix 4.

A questionnaire developed for FE ILT champions, a comparable network, and distributed via BECTA resulted in a negligible number of replies and was abandoned. The questionnaire however is available in Appendix 5.

2.3.6 Reporting the stories

As Holloway and Jefferson (2000) make clear narrative interviewing rather than question and answer means that the whole data should remain at the centre while paying attention to links and contradictions within the whole. Stories are thus available in full in Appendix 6. However for the purposes of data analysis selective quotations, sometimes quite extensive have been taken from the whole accounts to draw attention to links and themes and reported on the whole anonymously.

2.3.7 Project Literature

A review of project literature relevant to the evaluation aims was carried out. This investigated some earlier data collected and recorded in relation to the development of professional development networks and the artefacts available to these networks.

3. Evaluating attainment of the three themes within the original aim

3.1 The development of networks of learning technology specialists

3.1.2 The national network

An original aim of the project was to develop a Professional Development Network which would build on the experiences of the project team and function at a national level. The project team was active in establishing links and the informal network proved to be particularly important (Harvey 99 pg. 20).

Nationally, The EFFECTS contact list is still used and is renewed with new participants attending events, some regional networks continue to operate as e-mail discussion groups, coming together occasionally for these events and a SEDA Learning Technology Jisc-mail list is also in operation. Since 1999 the SEDA Embedding Learning Technology (ELT) network has built from this and has become one of SEDA's formal professional development networks. This now comprises a jisc mail discussion group, a SEDA ELT committee and is supported by SEDA organised events, mainly around the SEDA ELT award. Over the last year events organised by SEDA and those organised by the EFFECTS team have attracted an average of 25 delegates. In addition as the original EFFECTS team has moved to take positions in other institutions some of the 'seeds' from the EFFECTS project have been dispersed to others elsewhere.

How did people come to be part of this network?

The early network grew from the collaborative nature of the initial consortium and it seems that even at this early stage the workshops drew a layer of people from beyond the project, keen to learn from others' experiences.

I was part of the original EFFECTS project and have continued being involved. This network brings together people with both an interest in technology and pedagogy and that's great.

At first there were no acknowledged experts to congregate around – we were doing it ourselves. Early members were changing their courses, changing institutional cultures and were supporting others in doing the same. The project perhaps came at the right time – it had dynamism in its early stages – we felt we could make provocative statements and shift people to discuss issues.

I became involved because I was aware of it as a TLTP project and went to the first dissemination workshop because it was looking at issues I was becoming engaged in.

People spreading the word helped people. They were champions – people you had met at seminars who were doing the same thing somewhere else.

There were some quite heated arguments at the beginning as we were coming from a real range of starting points about embedding learning technology and pedagogic practice.

Most of the early networking was with other developers – we were building collaboration although this was essentially a by-product not the key aim. This was to set out to change the culture of our institutions but what we ended up doing was changing cultures outside our organisation. We didn't name it a network but we realised we had to share ideas about what really could work to bring about change.'

How did the project team think networks would develop?

Although the early networking has been described as a 'by product' of initial collaboration, sharing practice was a key aim from the beginning and there is evidence of real attempts to put in place frameworks to sustain and develop networks.

We thought about how to share the practice and tried to put together a cascade model across the regions – we were finding people we knew. Then we held a workshop for them with resources and activities and encouraged them to go back to their own networks and lead the initiatives. But they were keen to get someone from the project team to do it for them and as people left this caused problems and in some cases no one came. We continued to run workshops though. Around 30 people came to each one and this renewed our list of contacts. The kind of people who came were learning and teaching officers, SEDA people, people from JISC mail lists. This list was a great resource for dissemination. At the beginning these people didn't know each other although occasionally we tapped into a regional network.

(Project Manager)

It wasn't a tight network. We would run workshops externally at various places and at conferences such as ALTC and TLTP. The workshops would present the Plymouth approach, the UMIST approach, the UNL approach. (Project Officer)

I set up my regional network for 2 reasons: because I felt that the EFFECTS project team had provided such a useful network and been such a key to the continuance of it – of making it work. I felt such a local network would be people's only source of information on these kind of ELT issues and would connect up isolated people doing the same kind of work. Different contacts lead to 20 invitations to join an e-mail list and we have over 50 now. (Project officer /UNL)

And currently how do people come to be part of the network?

The current network seems to be made up of people involved in the original project, leaders of EFFECTS influenced SEDA ELT courses, people who are at some stage in developing such a programme and people keen to find out more. As a new course develops, the course leader is asked to present at an event on their experiences and course design and in this way they seem to be pulled more closely to the centre of the network.

I heard through the SEDA mailing and came to the event because I am thinking about putting on a course like this at my institution. I'd like to stay in touch to hear what others are doing. (Focus group)

I had some awareness of the EFFECTS project and I was looking for a course with a practitioner slant because of my participants. I was attracted to the EFFECTS programme as I'd heard about at conferences. It offered a nationally recognised accredited programme through SEDA. I thought this would be an incentive – people would get something out of it. People from the network advised us from the beginning although we had a clear idea what we wanted to do.

The network is now for us the ELT course leaders. We use it to improve our own courses.

My staff development officer suggested I came to hear about the ELT courses. This is a useful event and I would like to come to others perhaps to support the different stages we go through in developing and refining a course. (Focus group)

I come to these events when I hear of them through SEDA to hear about what others are doing. It's food for thought and a chance to hear from others doing the same kind of things in their organisations. (Focus group)

Someone at my institution has been involved in EFFECTS – he told me I should come a while ago and at last I have followed his advice and had a really good day. I'll definitely find out more. (Focus group)

In what ways is the network effective for you?

The focus group delegates were involved in the network for 2 reasons:

- To find out more about the ELT programme as they were considering developing one themselves

I need to be at events like this to hear from others what has worked and what hasn't. I like to know what others are doing

I can ask – has anyone tried doing it like this? And people can share their experiences with me here and afterward through e-mail or visits.

- To share ideas and discuss issues with regard to educational development and embedding learning technology

Talking to others gives you the confidence to go back and try new things

The discussions are very open, very collegial – problems are shared as well as success stories

The events come up and you think 'I can't really afford the time' and then you say 'no I need time out to think and plan and hear what other people are doing.'

I like the idea of people sharing ideas, materials and case studies and even getting other people to come and speak on my course.

The programme leaders interviewed included people who had been involved in the original EFFECTS team and people who had just begun to run an ELT programme. Thus some had been part of the informal EFFECTS network from the beginning while others had come to it through the SEDA ELT network.

In the same way that the focus group delegates came to the network because it met a need, this group had also come across EFFECTS at a time when they too were considering similar issues. However they still felt that they gained something from the network, that it informed their practice and some also expressed a sense of responsibility to share their experiences with others. The three key aspects seem to be attendance at the events, discussions with other network members and support in setting up and developing a course.

As a course leader I was more pedagogically focused but joining the network I developed as a course leader and became more learning technology focused.

The network provides a valuable insight into what's going on elsewhere. I feel I know people now at Conferences and so on now and I am very happy to be involved in sharing my experiences with others at the events.

The role of the network has played crucially different roles at different times for me.

D the external examiner has advised me from the beginning and P and J have spent a day here too. D brought his handbook. It was different but similar enough – especially the references and that gave me confidence. Their endorsement that it was OK was very reassuring. I am now wondering if I have been too harsh in marking the reflections. It's difficult because there are no benchmarks and I will have to see what D thinks.

I always got something out of the workshops. It's interesting to see what others are doing and get ideas to bring back to my own course.

We don't always agree but the discussions within the network have been very interesting and sometimes thought provoking.

What struck me particularly was what it was like to carry a group of academics through a course over weeks or months.

While developing materials for us I kept an eye on other people's stuff like the guidance for portfolios. I felt comfortable using some of this.

The EFFECTS web site was useful – looking at the case studies but eventually my focus did become internal. I think institutional pressures force this. We intended to put participants work on the web but we never did.

These networks intertwine with others such as those within The Association of Learning Technologists. Many of the people involved in networks associated with EFFECTS are also members of other networks such as ALT special interest groups.

I am not active but I am also a member of the ALT theory group and we're putting together a book from a symposium at ALT 2001 on the inadequacies of learning technology theory. A group has emerged from many of us involved in EFFECTS.

It's not that I feel isolated in my own institution though or even in general. I am embedded in a range of networks and in fact I think there is too much going on sometimes. I'd really like something to pull together the resources.

From within the original The EFFECTS Project, there is evidence that the value of the network was recognised from the onset, as was the need to develop and sustain it.

The coming together and finding out what others were doing was very important. People came and told us – this is what we're trying / developing to try and embed learning technology and at first there was a real range of ideas but after a while because of the sharing of good practice, the models were all a little similar. We knew that we needed to scale it up. We needed people with spare time and energy to go and evangelise. If I was to start again I would want to concentrate more on building the networks but this was new and lots of ground work was needed so it's a bit chicken and egg.

We've carried on putting on the workshops with people presenting on how they have set up courses for their staff and they show that people are still in need of this kind of thing. Institutions now take learning technology much more seriously but people aren't sure which

*model works best – integrated into a PG Cert, an accredited programme, supported projects around EFFECTS.
(Project Manager)*

*The key to making it work is the face to face meetings. Some people may get value out of regular information but some may be annoyed to get it from you if they get it from other sources but I always think that some people just don't get the information if they get it from me. This is their only source. I try and put something on the e-mail weekly. Once a month I try and get a thread going –we had a good one on key skills but sometimes it gets nowhere.
(Project Officer)*

Why do people join other networks? – A comparison

The reasons are very similar to those given above and emphasise a point raised by one of the ELT leaders that a network plays a different role at different times. It thus seems that it either has to be loose enough to encompass a range of needs or be tightly focused for one particular group of people and adapt or be reborn when that activity has come to its fruition. Mechanisms for sharing and creating best practice feature here too as does the importance of face to face meetings to energise the network and a sense of shared values and purpose.

Networks have to be fit for purpose and are different at different times if they reflect and feed into their membership – if they're evolutionary (LTSN BEST)

Lots of the people I support, lots of the lecturers are bewildered – they don't know how to deal with the numbers of new students, new technology, new types of student in front of them. They rely on their subject but what I realised was that they needed support from a wider group of experts and hopefully I thought this will lead some of them to reflect upon the teaching approaches they are using and so on. I joined the network actively very early on as I think it can help to provide this. It also sustains me especially through the conferences which really get you thinking and debating. (SEDA))

I was looking for something to provide a sense of community as I felt quite isolated in what I was trying to achieve and someone mentioned the M25 network. I lurked for a bit but liked what people were saying. People held the kind of values I felt I could support and they were doing the kinds of things I was trying to do. It seemed well organised. It wasn't haphazard and the information flow was good. (M25)

It kept knocking at my door. There are lots of networks around now and you can feel overwhelmed with information but I kept getting the e-mail invites, the bits of news and information and eventually someone told me they'd been to an event and it was really useful and I thought I'd go and see. It was great. (LTSN BEST)

I want to have influence on what's going on – it's not just a talking shop. But information and ideas are important. The, 'have you used this? what do you think about this?' conversations are very important. (SEDA))

The events are fun and useful and meeting others can break down isolation (M25)

I feel well inclined towards other members – we share lots of the same values and I feel part of something which is organic. (LTSN BEST)

It can be particularly helpful when I am developing something and I can find out what other people have done – what's worked and what hasn't. (M25)

It can be a great opportunity to pull together a wider range of people than you work with in your normal role and so you spark off ideas and see things from others perspectives. (SEDA))

3.1.3 The institutional networks

An important aspect of the EFFECTS capacity building objective was to maximise the impact of a small number of staff trying to provide training and support for a small number of participants within EFFECTS programmes so that any culture shift could be catalysed and then supported (Harvey 1999 pg. 17). Thus, as well as the national network building task, the project team were also keen to promote and support institutional communities of practice. One mechanism for this mirrored the capacity building effort across the national network as course participants were encouraged to disseminate their project findings across the course and where possible across their institution and more widely. The development of local networks seems to have proved more difficult however than the establishment of the national network and results are patchy.

The view from the project manager

What I want to do is give people processes to explore technology and look outside the box. I know though that participants are limited by time. Perhaps it comes down to recognising that this is the difference between work-based learning and teaching a course. With ELT we really need to think about learning sets, tutorials and supported workshops

Who are the participants?

Participation on these courses is varied and this seems to impact upon the relative success of the dissemination aspect of the local programmes.

What was good though was that the course attracted a range of staff who wouldn't have met otherwise – transient new lecturers with little experience and people who had been there 30 years who were reluctant to change. Both were 'senior lecturers' but this bore little resemblance to their levels of experience. With experienced staff a lot of the time they don't think about their day to day work – they are in a state of unconscious consciousness but things impact upon them which do make them think further about what they are doing such as a shift to on line delivery or a change in assessment methods. This is a phenomenon I have seen on the course – staff changing practice because of an external impact. Technology is a good way to make people think about things differently.

Mostly they are experienced lecturers from faculties other than computing. There's a performance related pay scheme and some have their attendance set as a target by their line manager. Achieving this course is a manageable handy target. Other people come because they have a project they are working on and want some support.

I've had a complete mix on my course – academic and support staff and this year someone from the local FE College. I feel the course is made up of enthusiasts. They are already converted but there still is when using new technology nonetheless a need to review again and again what you're doing. Technology needs you to think systematically about what you are doing. Changing your teaching methods means rethinking what you are doing and the project is usually innovative and so does lead to change in terms of rethinking processes.

My participants come from a range of faculties - usually they are discipline based and are not technology focused but they have a project they are working on and enjoy the idea of the support they will get from the course.

I got some funding for some ICT posts in the faculties and realised that I had to find the people with an interest and train them up in the wider issues. I liked the idea of doing this through an on line course.

There are always a variety of people on the courses but we've never built up a momentum. We see people who have to do it and who want to. Technology has changed but I think the course is still relevant. The SEDA ELT course is independent from the technology and so can remain relevant. I think it has yet to see its day.

The people who come on the course are not necessarily the movers and shakers – the people with influence. They are often on short-term contracts or people appointed on the basis of their research that realise they need some technical support.

To what extent have internal networks developed?

A substantial number of leaders expressed concern that the dissemination aspect of the course had not been as effective as they had planned in building an internal network. In addition where the course was designed around optional workshops, tutorials and on line learning the groups often seemed to lack cohesion and identity. However others point to some evidence of networks developing and impact in terms of curriculum changes at an institutional level as a consequence of people attending the courses.

The programme leaders

The participants don't really see themselves as a network as they are discipline based and attendance at the workshops I put on is patchy. The dissemination of projects is also problematic. Some haven't finished by the end of the course and anyway would rather publish a paper than give a presentation to the group.

Dissemination is often tricky, as the portfolio sometimes has to be handed in before the project is finished. The last workshop is usually made up of a presentation on 'work in progress'.

A problem seems to be that people don't have a sense of team work – of supporting and learning from each other and of collaborating to share skills. Networking across the institution is patchy but my course participants are an example of good practice and the course has given them more confidence and skills. But is it a culture change? I'd say there are small pockets of enthusiasm.

It can be 2 years or so before someone gets the chance to really report on their project properly at a national conference for example or really begin to influence their department and so within the course the impact can be hard to judge. Someone is doing a workshop this February on the project they worked on in autumn 2001. Also we don't always hear about the impact when people finish. Somebody came on the course and then later I heard she was leading a new technology module across her dept and was planning to use the web for all new students.

At my institution we didn't cement the internal networks – we didn't reach the Computer Service for example. The university was very centralised and top down and this was partly why the EFFECTS programme was subversive. Really we needed to build links earlier. I'd do this if I did it again. I was aiming at culture change in the university through individuals critically analysing institutional practice but the culture was very strong.

The course gained a level of respect when 2 subject leaders and a head of school came on it. It had quite an impact on their areas and there was quite a cascading down from the course. Another participant also had quite an influential project.

My participants only came together on the course for induction because it was on line. Weekly activities involved on line discussion and conferencing. But off the course the participants did meet up for team meetings and I think the course helped them become a team that communicates well. The course has been good for sharing ideas about pedagogy. We wouldn't have had the time to do this in our normal meetings. Without the course the participants would have just attended a few workshops. If I hadn't pushed them into this professional development they wouldn't have looked into pedagogical issues. But it took longer than I expected for them to feel comfortable with the discussion groups and e-mail.

Our programme worked to encourage participants to network internally. For example they had to give a presentation first to each other and then to colleagues. They became better at dissemination. This is the real evidence a participant needs to pass the course.

The course participant

I didn't see the others on the course as a local network. I was the only one not from their institution and most didn't attend the workshops though I did.

3.2 The role of network in the transfer of collated outcomes to their own institutional practices

The network and more specifically the face to face events and meetings seem to have played a key role in allowing people to transfer collated outcomes to their own institutional practices. There is less evidence of people accessing collated outcomes remotely from the EFFECTS web site and transferring them to their own institutional practices.

Programme leaders

Programme leaders have taken the EFFECTS outcomes but have recognised that the importance of localised course design, echoing the issues raised in the 1999 evaluation report (Harvey *ibid.* pg. 430 and the support from within the network in adapting and responding to local needs.

It was useful when someone from EFFECTS brought their handbook in for me. It was different to ours but similar enough – particularly the references.

I was also interested in the materials – I still use adapted versions now and some of the stuff from other universities which was on the EFFECTS website is very good. I think it's great on my course to be able to say this has been developed at Plymouth or Southampton or wherever. It makes it feel like a nation wide scheme and convinces people of its value. Time is key and its clear that some of the people running the courses have had more time that I have to produce stuff

It was the 7 outcomes that attracted me. As I listened I was thinking yes that would work at my institution

I didn't use the web site or the materials.

I didn't really use the web site or the materials as we had clear idea what we wanted to do.

The weakness for my course has been the presentations – the timing was difficult, as they had to get their findings in before December. Also the levels of feedback was poor. I tried to get them to reflect on why this was so and I think it was because it was hard for them to get hold of students if they weren't in a lecturing role and some lecturers were luke warm about support staff on the course and didn't make it easy for staff to talk things through with students etc.

Reflection was difficult – some didn't say how with details how they had reached their objectives more just repeated their evidence for meeting the criteria.

I realise that if it is to be validated at M level it will need more evidence of critically reflecting on the literature but students say it took huge amounts of time. The feedback was that there was not enough time to reflect on it and read widely.

I see more and more people interested in EFFECTS courses though they don't all necessarily want an official accredited standardised course. They have heard the message from EFFECTS over 3 years and are coming forward to find out more 'just in time'.

From the beginning my course was M level but unlike other EFFECTS courses this one does not have a reflective element – it's very instrumental. Its key aim is a publishable case study on the implementation of an aspect of C and IT in their area and the evidence that can be gathered.

3.3.2 Focus Group delegates felt that the sharing practice events were very valuable in developing their own courses, particularly in hearing stories from others and having the opportunity to learn from others' experiences. Evidence for this can be seen in (3.1.2) when people talk of their reasons for being part of this network. They felt that a web site with case studies and materials would also be of help. They also liked the idea of experienced course leaders acting as mentors to people developing their own courses.

The range of expertise at the events is really valuable to me

While I am hearing about others programmes, I'm thinking but would that work at my place and then someone else says, 'at my institution it's arranged like this' and straight away you see parallels with your own set up.

Project People

Building a network of practitioners – people running these kind of courses was an original aim. Perhaps we could say we planned the forerunner to the LTSN model – bringing together and sharing good practice. Most of the early networking was with developers – we were building collaboration although this was essentially a by-product not the key aim. We didn't name it a network but we realised we had to share ideas about what really could work to bring about change.

We tried to put in place a cascade model across the regions - we were finding people we knew. Then we held a workshop for them with resources and activities and encouraged them to go back to their own networks and lead the initiatives. But they were keener to get someone from the project team to do it for them and as people left this caused some problems and in some cases no one came.

At first there was a real range of ideas at the workshops but after a while because of the sharing of good practice, the models were a little similar.

Institutions now take learning technology more seriously but people aren't sure which model works best – integrated into a PGCERT, an accredited course, supported projects around the EFFECTS outcomes. My view is we need a bit of all of them.

The dissemination aspect of the project was really important and from the beginning people really went for it. People would present the Plymouth approach, the UMIST approach and so on.

Effects started as a project but turned into a network – though a tightly stretched one because it was developing, building relationships, getting people to change practice.

3.3 The contribution by the network to the ongoing development of a resource framework

How do programme leaders contribute?

The extent to which resources are currently shared across the network is complex.

No I didn't use any of the materials on the web site. I thought it was important that we developed our own that would be relevant here. There isn't such a culture of sharing materials and so on here (UMIST)

I didn't use the EFFECTS web site or the case studies I suppose because J and I had a clear idea of what we wanted to do. (UEL)

X and Y from the project did a great job in trying to pull together the case studies and course materials but perhaps earlier on we all should have pushed harder for the sharing of materials. But of course institutions are to some extent in competition and of course this could create a tension. Z is in a fairly stable position and so is happy to share materials but others might be under more pressure to succeed with their course as a personal thing.

I am concerned that a resource for the network would be on line and open to the world. We need a mechanism to access others materials though not on a global web site. Perhaps something that is password protected on the EFFECTS web site. Some leaders are very keen to share materials but sometimes all you want is to see how other people have gone about things. What are their recommended texts for example? I think it would be valuable because we are all developers and we should be completely open about what we are doing.

We are all too busy to spend lots of time putting things on someone else's portal. We intended to put participants work on the web site but in the end we didn't.

We have to think about what we want very carefully. The network makes shared resources more tangible but EFFECTS is too small and RESULTS is too ambitious. We need something to structure around such as SEDA ELT and someone to organise the meetings and mail lists to pull the thing together.

Three of us at my place saw the value in a local network and so it was developed. X was the dominant influence in building this, building it up and posting things to it. I think Y was doing the same in his area. Their positions and their personalities encouraged this approach. Because X was funded by the EFFECTS project she had more time and less of an institutional tie.

One leader pointed to an opportunity for greater levels of transfer

I'd really like someone to pull together resources for embedding learning technology and e learning. It's changing all the time and there's always new stuff to read and pass on. The network is now for us the course leaders. We use it to improve own courses. Some shared teaching would be great; perhaps we could pool workshops which we could offer each other. My university would really benefit from this but perhaps bigger places don't really see the need.

The focus groups also pointed to the need for careful design in developing a resource framework.

We need something which is accessible to all but which encourages participation at all levels. Early case studies right through to Course Handbooks from established courses and events for people at the different stages of developing their courses.

Who would facilitate this? Could it be someone with a sort of cameo role – just there to do this? It would need someone to take up and sustain the initiative.

Gathering information and searching for information now takes up a lot of my time – it would be great if this could be made easier.

It needs someone to oversee it, to grow it and sustain it.

This is echoed in the words of the people involved in comparable networks

The technology has to be enabling. We are all busy and you can't fall at the first hurdle because you can't use some bit of complex technology. Ease of communication is important. (M25)

You need someone dedicated to keeping the network going and trawling for resources, ideas to discuss, new projects. (LTSN)

The network is a real resource because it has community identity and shared or related needs. We hold a range of expertise. (SEDA)

The project leaders

X did a lot of stuff and people got together and shared ideas, course materials, and experiences. At this stage there wasn't a resource bank or anything. I would have liked a much more structured system to collate resources and to have built up more shared resources from the beginning. An early web site would have been great but there wasn't the technology when we started.

4. Summary discussion

In this section, the evaluation above is summarised through a series of questions taken from the original evaluation objectives agreed with the project team.

4.1.1. Who are the practitioners involved in the national network?

The current network comprises people involved in the original EFFECTS project, programme leaders of EFFECTS courses, people in the process of developing similar courses themselves and people newly aware of the Embedding Learning Technologies courses.

Many involved in the original EFFECTS project have moved on to other posts and other institutions, however this has created strong links with these new institutions and wider avenues through which to reach potential new network members. These people have played a key role in sustaining the network through their involvement as speakers and publishers on a wide range of aspects of the EFFECTS project.

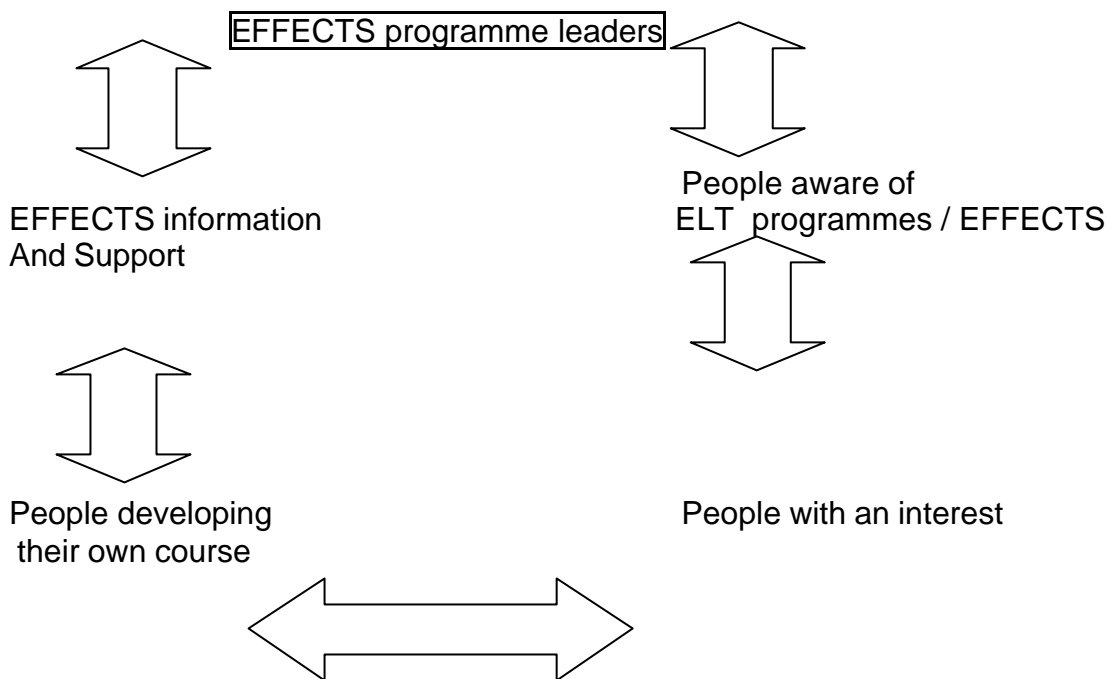
The majority of current EFFECTS programme course leaders are people who have been involved in EFFECTS since its early days. There is evidence of real value being placed upon the early consortium discussions and subsequent collaboration. They are primarily staff developers responding to a particular need for a professional development programme to effectively embed learning technologies. This need may have arisen because of curriculum changes such as the development of on line learning, wider institutional triggers such as investment in new posts to support the development of educational technology or due to requests by individual colleagues for support for their work in embedding learning technology. Evidence seems to indicate an effective mix of people with a pedagogical and technical interest and a wide range of experience which leads to a rich input into the network. The presentations by this group of staff are particularly valued by those new to the project.

Harvey's 1999 report pointed to the 'openness and 'willingness' to collaborate' (ibid. pg. 55) as a key factor in the development of a national network of interested practitioners. Evidence points to this remaining a factor for a newer layer of people who are now running the SEDA ELT programme. These people have come to the network through their colleagues' knowledge of EFFECTS or their own growing understanding through attendance at events or workshops on the project and the ELT programme. Many comment on the value of sharing practice and collaboration with people to whom they feel well inclined to work with and who share the same underpinning values. This echoes Wenger's work on the development of communities of practice, particularly the importance of the development of shared practice 'by interacting around problems, solutions and insights and building a common store of knowledge' (Wenger 1998). She goes on to describe the community of practice as 'a learning community whose practice is to keep alive the creative

tension between competence and experience' (ibid.) and again one can see the network events as being key to this.

Additionally attendance at workshops indicates a further layer of people who are interested in hearing more about the programmes with a view to perhaps developing them at their own institutions. The events provide opportunities for these people too who may be described as being on the periphery of the network. Recent events indicate a growing number at this stage reflecting the growing interest in professional development and accreditation.

Sustaining the interest of four types of network members seems to be key to the network's success. Programme leaders report both a responsibility for sustaining and developing the network and a level of support and engagement with their own practice through the network. Some of the support latterly provided by EFFECTS project staff in terms of encouraging the dissemination of good practice (Harvey 1999 pg. 51) has been embedded into the support provided within the SEDA ELT programme. The process seems to be cyclical and in this way the network has the potential to be re energised as new people join, develop their own programmes and act as mentors to others



In this way the network can be described as organic or evolutionary as it grows in response to input from a range of contributors as lurkers become course developers and then course leaders. This developmental process was also highlighted as a key factor by people involved in other networks and is a key factor in Wenger's work on the establishment of communities of practice. (Wenger 1998)

4.1.2 How do people become aware of the network?

EFFECTS project staff pointed to the need to evangelise in order to grow the network. This seems to have occurred in three key ways:

- Through the collaborative nature of the project which has led to a number of staff who, having been involved with EFFECTS, have moved to other institutions, and have influenced others to become involved
- Through the development of the SEDA Embedding Learning Technologies Professional Development Programme and the encouragement to SEDA ELT programme leaders to share their stories of course design and implementation at national workshops
- Through effective linkages with other networks such as those through JISC, SEDA and ALT

The national network can be described as dispersed (Hildreth P, Kimble C 2000) and thus it relies upon the success of the face to face events and its continuous presence as a source of information and support. As one respondent reported, 'It has to keep knocking at your door.' This it was recognised relies on someone having responsibility for the network's development and flow of information. Currently the network is communicated to through the e-mail using the jisc mail discussion lists, the EFFECTS contacts list and through SEDA mailings.

The motor for the national network seems to be the SEDA ELT programme and there is potential for this to grow if supported effectively.

4.1.3 How have people used the network in developing their courses?

Feedback indicates that people feel that the story telling events are a very important part of their experience of the network. They come to the network to fulfil a need – the same need which was articulated by the project manager as an original motivation for EFFECTS. The programmes developed by EFFECTS seem to be sufficiently flexible and relevant to remain as effective and appropriate options for people now developing their own programmes. Additionally people are still expressing a need to explore the various models available, in fact the situation is perhaps even more complex now with the growth of interest in professional development and technological initiatives such as virtual learning environments. The model continues to be cascaded to a number of new institutions, which is further evidence of transferability.

The events provide some of the support mechanisms originally planned by the EFFECTS team in terms of sharing good practice across the regions. Support has also been designed into the SEDA ELT programme allowing for support for mentoring and collaboration. The nature of the network now provides staff at different stages of programme development and involved in a variety of different course designs and this mix of people provides a rich resource which people value highly.

The extent to which people used more formal resources such as EFFECTS case studies, others' course materials and handbooks is variable. However there is evidence that face to face support by a more experienced course leader has been valuable, as has informal networking as a result of meeting people at the events.

The focus group however, who were on the whole, at the early stages of course development, expressed a real interest in a pooling of resources for the network. They cited time pressure as being a real factor in their ability to review good practice efficiently. An easy to access web site was felt to be a useful tool.

Members of other networks expressed their concern that any technological support should be easy to use and inclusive and experienced network members highlighted the difficulties in gathering and synthesising material from across such a diverse range of programmes. Some also highlighted their concern over the sharing of resources particularly when levels of contribution were so uneven. Some staff reported being very happy to work on materials which could be shared while others pointed to applicability issues and lack of time. Points raised also in the 1999 report (Harvey J pg. 53)

4.1.4 To what extent have institutional networks been established?

There is some evidence that the active recruitment of academics and general and professional staff from across a range of disciplines onto ELT programmes has enabled development to occur across institutions. Many particularly reported on the positive impact of high profile champions becoming participants However the extent to which this had led to the development of effective institutional networks is unclear.

Many of the leaders report to a real mix of participants on the course, not just from a range of disciplines but with a range of responsibilities and experience. Some have developed projects which have had a real impact while others have faced difficulties due to changes in technology or lack of support from colleagues. Additionally attendance at workshops can be erratic due to time pressures, an anti collaboration culture remains in some places and new developments such as on line learning seem to have mounted a further challenge as participants grapple with the technology involved in discussion boards and e-mail.

One important strategy to encourage the development of internal networks is through the dissemination aspect of the course and some course leaders reported cases of people really moving on in the light of this experience – speaking at local and national events, publishing articles and moving on to better posts. However others spoke of the real difficulties involved in providing space at the end of the programme for this activity. Some reported a frustration in not being aware of the long term impact or developments associated with the projects once a course had come to an end and support

could no longer be given. People were unclear for example about the extent to which course participants were supporting others undertaking similar developmental activities once they had finished the course.

In reflecting on how their programmes had developed, some of the programme leaders expressed regret that they hadn't been able to cement internal networks earlier. There was some indication that course design was routinely evaluated to ensure greater involvement of the participants with people looking to on line learning, a different mix of workshops and one to one support and work based learning techniques such as the creation of learning sets.

4.1.5 What examples of good practice are in evidence with regard to setting up and maintaining networks?

- ❑ The national network has been allowed to evolve from a project rooted in collaboration to become a national focus for professional development work in this area without losing its initial philosophy of learning through shared experience by providing a space for reflection and multiple view points
- ❑ The network is re energised through events allowing for the sharing of good practice and face to face contact for people at all stages of the development process, tapping into experience and knowledge and emerging experience and knowledge.
- ❑ Newer programme leaders are brought into the network more actively through encouragement to present on their experiences and mentor others, through a process by which 'soft' knowledge' becomes hard and tacit knowledge is exchanged.
- ❑ Contact lists are grown through new delegates attending events and being added to the list. People manage the lists with a commitment to the network.
- ❑ The profile of the network remains fairly high through the range of seminar presentations, publications and through the national SEDA framework.
- ❑ Network members are contacted at regular intervals
- ❑ The network provides for a need which is still current , even growing, amongst members
- ❑ The network is valued by those at the centre and those at its periphery.

5. Recommendations

While it is recognised that funding has finished, some of the following recommendations could apply to the networks now living on, both nationally and locally within institutions, or could provide the basis for future funded work.

- ❑ *Management and co-ordination of the national ELT network.* Levels of attendance at events and growth of the network contact lists indicate the potential for further support and development for this network, however this needs somebody to take responsibility for the update of the contact lists, the flow of information to network members and the co-ordination of events. This could perhaps be organised through SEDA ELT.
- ❑ *Further exploration of the creation of a resource bank for the network.* The sharing of people's stories and strategies as they develop and refine their courses remains a key factor for network members. Some way of capturing these experiences would assist new project teams.
- ❑ *Further strengthening of the network.* A number of initiatives could build upon the current network with the aim of extending collaboration. Examples include, regional shared workshops, a pool of speakers willing to exchange workshops, the development of workshop packs, funded secondments between institutions, a collaborative bid between institutions to research fundamental issues of the project such as reflective practice or the relative merits of modes of delivery.
- ❑ *Strategies for further developing internal institutional networks.* These might be helpful to explore in an event for current programme leaders which could look at work based learning techniques and Wenger's and others' work on the development of Communities of Practice.
- ❑ *Further exploration of modes of delivery to support the EFFECTS Learning outcomes through work based learning.* This might take the form of a publication for the LTSN or SEDA made up of case studies exploring models of staff development delivery such as learning sets, coaching and on line learning which have been developed in response to feedback received from course participants.
- ❑ *Further exploration of accreditation frameworks.* The SEDA award has provided a momentum and organising framework for the EFFECTS programme which will live on, however there is potential to further strengthen this framework through links with other bodies such as those within the FE sector or the emerging HE Learning and Teaching Academy.

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7. Appendix 1

Themes identified and explored with programme leaders.

How they came to be involved in EFFECTS / in SEDA ELT

Relevance to internal and external factors

Means by which they first came into contact with the project

What was gained from initial contact?

Changing roles – responsibilities and involvement

Benefits of being involved

The role of the network in supporting course development

The extent to which EFFECTS outcomes were transferred to their locality

The role of network events in sharing practice

The extent to which shared resources were developed and / or used

Early aims in developing their programmes

Reflections on how they might have done things differently

Contributions to a shared resources

The role of the network in maintaining course quality and relevance

Who is the network for?

What is the motor for the network?

What has been its role in the continued development of the course?

The relative importance of underpinning values and EFFECTS philosophy

Their course

Trends in uptake of participants

Levels of institutional networking

Levels of institutional support

Participants contribution to institutional developments

Implications for the network

What have they gained from involvement?

What gets in the way of effective involvement?

Levels of support required

The role of SEDA ELT

The future?

8. Appendix 2

Themes identified and explored with the project manager and project officer.

The original aims of the project

What is EFFECTS? Its underlying philosophies
The development of early networks
The aims of the early networks
The problems and issues which arose

Supporting and developing networks

The role of events
Methods of sustaining and developing a national network
The range of roles within the network
The development of shared artefacts
Benefits of becoming involved
Methods of supporting and nurturing institutional networks

Looking back

Triggers and barriers encountered
What they would have done differently
Unintended outcomes
That of which they are particularly proud
Key milestones
Examples of good practice
The role of EFFECTS in developing current networks

The future

Key factors for the sustainability of the networks
Future plans

9 Appendix 3

Themes identified and explored with the network focus group

How they came to be involved in the network

Mechanisms by which they became aware
Their perceptions of the relevance of the network to their practice
Their knowledge of EFFECTS
Relevance to external and internal factors
First impressions of the network

The role of the network in supporting course development

The stage they are at in terms of developing their programme
The ways in which the network supports them
Factors which make the network effective
Barriers which prevent effective engagement with the network
The relative importance of the development of shared resources

Implications for the network

Linkage with other networks
Ways in which they may contribute to and be supported by the network
External factors which may impact upon the work of the network
Sustainability issues post EFFECTS

10. Appendix 4

Themes identified and explored with representatives from other networks

How they came to be involved in their networks

Relevance to internal and external factors

Means by which they first came into contact with the network

Ways of becoming active in the network

Changing roles – and involvement in the networks

The role of the network in supporting their work

The regularity and nature of their contact with the network

Factors which make it particularly effective

Barriers to effective engagement with the network

The relative importance of underpinning values and shared understanding with other network members

The role of shared artefacts

The impact of the network on their work

11. Appendix 5

The FE ILT Champions questionnaire

EFFECTS Questionnaire

What is the EFFECTS Project?

The Effective Framework for Embedding Communication and Information Technology (EFFECTS) Project was funded from 1998 through the Higher Education Funding Council's Teaching and Learning Technologies Project. It had, as a key focus the professional development of staff who were starting to engage with the problem of embedding communication and information technology into learning and teaching. Four universities (Plymouth, Oxford Brookes, North London and UMIST) agreed to undertake a project to develop an accredited professional development programme to support these staff. In addition lessons about the process of creating and implementing EFFECTS courses were to be shared by the project team and developed as a resource for future networks of course leaders and practitioners.

What is the aim of this questionnaire?

The project came to an end last year and the number of universities now running accredited EFFECTS programmes (such as that at Plymouth University <http://www.educationaldevelopment.net.elt2/index.htm> - Plymouth ELT programme) is testament to the project's success. However, as external evaluator, I have been asked by the team to examine in particular the role of EFFECTS in establishing an effective network of practitioners. In doing this, the project team would like to compare the views of those within the EFFECTS network with those of people involved in other networks.

As part of an important FE information learning technology 'community of practice' I would be very grateful if you would consider completing this questionnaire. I am interested in what *really* makes an effective network, how it can be sustained and how developed.

Thank you for your co-operation and if you require any further information or clarification please contact me directly.

Name

Job Title / Role

Department
Institution

1. How did you become involved in the FERL practitioners' network

2. What do you get from this network?

3. How do you stay in touch with the network? (please tick)

E –mail
Workshops
Via the web-site
Through mailings
Through face to face meetings
Through telephone conversations
Other (please specify)

4. To what extent do you interact with other members of the network?

5. How regularly are you in touch with the network? (please tick)

Daily
Weekly

Monthly
Every few months
Rarely

6. In your view what makes an effective network?

7. Which of the following would you use your network for (please tick)

- Technical help
- Ideas for integrating technology into a new course or unit
- Developing computer aided assessment
- Finding information about software for a class
- Supporting staff wanting to use technology in their class
- New ideas
- Professional support for your role

8. Generally, how would you describe your department's attitude to your role as an ILT champion?

9. List below anything which gets in the way of you fully utilising the network:

10. If you were to / are setting up a professional development programme for staff interested in embedding ILT in the curriculum how could a network help you?

Thank you so much for your help. Please let me know if you would like to hear more about this project.

Please e-mail a completed questionnaire back to me or send it to:

Julie Hall
Development and Training Adviser
Kingston University
Millennium House
21 – 23 Eden Street
Kingston upon Thames

11. Appendix 6

Narrative accounts from the programme leaders, project manager and project officer

