Building a community of practice and employer engagement to enhance Systems Thinking in Practice.

**Martin Reynolds**  
Department of Engineering and Innovation

*With colleagues:*

Chris Blackmore  
Ray Ison  
Rupesh Shah  
Elaine Wedlock

The 3rd eSTEeM Annual Conference  
The Open University  
**Date:** 6 May 2014

Applied Systems Thinking in Practice (ASTiP) Group
Overview

- Systems Thinking in Practice (STiP): a postgraduate programme
- STiP performances
- STiP challenges

- eSTEEeM project: what?
- eSTEEeM project: how?
- eSTEEeM project: why?
### Postgraduate Certificate in Systems Thinking in Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option 1</th>
<th>Option 2</th>
<th>Option 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TU811 (30 credits) + TU812 (30 credits)</td>
<td>TU811 (30 credits) + 30 credits from other relevant postgraduate modules</td>
<td>TU812 (30 credits) + 30 credits from other relevant postgraduate modules</td>
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### Postgraduate Diploma in Systems Thinking in Practice

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>Postgraduate Certificate (60 credits) + extra 60 credits: (2 x 30 credit modules or 1 x 60 credit module) choose from relevant postgraduate modules; must include TU811 and TU812 if you have not already completed both of these</td>
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### MSc in Systems Thinking in Practice

<table>
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<td>Research route</td>
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Systems Thinking in Practice
Postgraduate qualifications from the Open University

**X2 Core modules:**

Thinking strategically: systems tools for managing change  
*TU811 – 30 credits*

- views managing as about taking action on the basis of your understanding of a complex interconnected situation, where others involved may have different understanding, motivation and interests.
- develops your understanding of complex situations using robust tools from the traditions of systems practice to think strategically about change and uncertainty.

Managing systemic change: inquiry, action and interaction  
*TU812 – 30 credits*

- views change as inescapable in everyday managing in situations.
- equips you with skills to shape the nature and direction of change
- enables you to use systems thinking and practice to help you engage with change and recognise the interconnected nature of organisations and environments.
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**Postgraduate Certificate in Systems Thinking in Practice**

*60 credits*

Understand the nature of complex problem situations and the tools with which they can be tackled.

**Postgraduate Diploma in Systems Thinking in Practice**

*PG certificate plus 60 credits*

Learn how, in complex situations you can engage with others in coming to a common language, common understanding and an agreed way to tackle complex problem situations.

**MSc in Systems Thinking in Practice**

*PG diploma plus 60 credits*

Integrate the knowledge of the tools and approaches of systems thinking in practice with your own specialist discipline area, and knowledge of business and management.
Systems Thinking in Practice
Postgraduate programme 2011
Masters/ Diploma/ Certificate

TU811
30 credits
Thinking strategically:
systems tools for managing change

TU812
30 credits
Managing systemic change:
Inquiry, action and interaction
# Systems Thinking in Practice

## Postgraduate recruitment since 2010

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>TU811</th>
<th>TU812</th>
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<td>2013</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>365</td>
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<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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# Systems Thinking in Practice

Wider sales of the four books co-published with Springer (UK)

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Systems Thinking in Practice
LinkedIn alumni group

- **Module forums**: successful pedagogy through online discussion groups with both TU811 and TU812

- **Self-organising since 2010**: x550 + alumni…

- **Mutual support**: advice and views shared regarding choice of electives and opportunities arising for consultancies etc.

- **Published outputs**: x3 peer-reviewed publications following critical reading and feedback on alumni site

- **Events**: face to face meetings in York, Dublin, and London (forthcoming)
Systems Thinking in Practice

Key challenges

- **Demand pull?** employment opportunities (alumni)
- **Supply driven?** OU marketing of STiP (Faculty silos)
- **Retention:** 70-80% - not significantly low, but…
- “**Wacky subject!**”: The Independent review 2013*
  - epistemic understanding of systems
  - active pedagogy
  - design learning
- ‘**Delivery’ model:** supply-customer (passive top-down)

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Design a postgraduate recruitment and retention (learning) system based on systemic inquiry

- Case study focus on PG programme of Systems Thinking in Practice (STiP)
- With employer engagement

Who?
- Martin Reynolds
- Chris Blackmore
- Ray Ison
- Rupesh Shah
- Elaine Wedlock

Members of Applied systems thinking in practice (ASTiP) Group
3 phases of systemic inquiry (c.18 months)

- Understanding existing PG situation of students (x10 interviews and x1 group follow-up video-conference meeting)

- Engaging with STiP alumni group and employers (x20 interviews + seminar and workshops)

- Developing systemic model of retention and recruitment;
  - Working paper
  - Refereed journal paper
  - Platform bid for wider systemic inquiry (HEFC/ ESRC/ EPSRC…)

Who does it?

- Two ALs (c.24 days in total)
- ASTiP team (c. 80 days)
Exploring an alternative pathway of partnership for postgraduate curriculum development

• Drawing on largely ‘untapped’ resource of alumni experiences and enthusiasms coupled with employers needs (unique to OU)

• Reducing dependence on ‘externalised’ (and often costly) marketing

• Developing more relevant and quality-enhanced curriculum content/structure and support

Who benefits?

• University PG support
• Learners and employers
Dr Martin Reynolds
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The Open University

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