OULDI-JISC project

Narrative 19

Ian Campbell is the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience and Staff Development in his university. His university was one of the partners of the JISC-funded Open University Learning Design Initiative (OULDI) project between 2009 and 2011, and the OULDI team at the university conducted a baseline mapping of the university's design, approval and review process, conducted two Design Challenge[1] workshops for staff and worked closely with two faculties in the redesign of their curriculum offer.

Although not personally involved in the project, Ian was quick to see the benefits of the approach and championed the project at every level. Subsequently, Ian has been able to identify a number of key impacts of the project from his own perspective. Primarily, he sees the OULDI tools and approaches (i.e. the use of representations and conceptual frameworks to support design process, dialogues, and thinking) as helping inform the university's new learning and teaching strategy - particularly in relation to the programme design and delivery strand - a critical element of which relates to technology enhanced learning and design of programmes using blended learning:

> "The bottom line is that actually I suppose - although not explicitly - the work of the project has informed the new learning and teaching strategy and is integral for what we will be doing going forward [...] the work from the project actually has been built into [the programme design and delivery] theme [...] it is undoubtedly the case that the project has informed that particular theme and will do going forward".

Also, he believes that the project has enabled the university to gain a more objective and critical understanding about where it is in relation to technology and design for learning; both in terms of what staff do, but also in terms of attitudes and values to technology and learning across the university, and what steps the university might take to "raise the bar across all areas":

> "What we do realise is that we need to raise the bar around the sorts of things that have been part of the project. So it is [...] variable isn't it across the institution?[...] I could bring 10 academics in here and you'd go "oh flipping heck [the university is] right on the pace here" but I could also bring 10 academics in here and you'd go " [the university is] completely off the pace here" but it's the how we share the [...] philosophy or the [...] principles [...] It's more than just the theme within the learning and teaching strategy"

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[1] For more information about these workshops see
http://jiscdesignstudio.pbworks.com/w/page/33043344/OULDI%20-%20Design%20Challenge%20Workshop

> *"I would say that as a university there was a recognition that we needed to change and shift where we currently were otherwise we would just get left [behind]. [...] And so the learning design part of that was being talked about [...] people started going "actually that has all sorts of potential across the university [...] And because a few people recognised the importance of it, people started talking in a way that went "hang on a minute we're not enhancing the learning opportunities for students by some of the actions we're taking" and then had a conversation about "well what needs to happen?" I think that from the perspective of the project - and some of the things relating to it –[the project] made us kick start something that then got shared more broadly across the university".*

In particular Ian sees the workshops as being a key way the principles of the project have been communicated across the university and sees a need for more of these:

> *"And then I think it's fair to say that we've been trying to spread the word through whatever mechanisms that might be - whether it be through sharing of good practice workshops, whether it be through other mechanisms such as the [Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice] - making new staff aware of some of the things that were important - that are of importance - for the university and what the possibilities are and may be".*

> *"My observation was, or is, rightly or wrongly, that the learning design workshops to me were particularly effective in engaging people and as a result of that then stimulated a whole bunch of stuff that came out of that".*

> *"What we became aware of from the learning design workshops is that the people in the workshops really valued them, and they felt that they hadn't had the opportunity to share, understand, think, reflect, in relation to the various components [before]. So I think that's what I would say - there's definitely the need for that to continue".*

As the university moves forward with the implementation of the learning and teaching strategy, Ian sees further embedding of a learning design approach into the formal curriculum design processes:

> *"My view is that we align some of the stuff around course approvals and actually address the things relating to learning design. We do, but there's some things that could be made absolutely explicit that currently might not be touched upon [...] I have in my mind that there should be some key questions or key areas that we ask those questions, so that the course approval panel can be assured that those initiatives that are important in the learning and teaching strategy are being addressed by schools or the courses".*

Ian recognises that not everyone in the institution has been impacted by the project but believes that enough people have been for the momentum of change to continue:

"I wouldn't say it has touched everybody [...] you know, that's not the case [...] if I'm being honest, that's the same for everything isn't it? But it has touched quite a lot of people already [...] indeed I think there's now if you then look at those subject areas, or subjects who have redesigned their curriculum [...] you would probably see more of innovative learning design approaches as a result of that [...] I can't put my hand on my heart and say this is definitely the case, but if you were to go to [the faculty of Health] and go "right [...] these are the possibilities from a learning design perspective and here is the innovative stuff that you can do" there are enough academics within that school, that subject area, who would say "we need to embrace that and this is the way it comes through in the curriculum".

When asked what advice he would give other institutions wanting to embed a learning design approach into university processes and practices, Ian emphasises the importance of not just securing senior level buy-in, but engaging an enthusiastic champion at a senior level:

"I definitely believe it needs a champion – well, as high up the tree as you can possibly go if you like, because if that isn't there then it definitely isn't going to take off. Actually, it's probably due to [the university's OULDI lead] [...] really having a passion about it [and] not just bringing it to my attention, but giving me much more of an awareness of it and the positive things that it could do, and what the possibilities might be. So I think somebody who is prepared to listen and go "you know what, that's good stuff" [...] - somebody in the institution who has some sort of responsibility where it can have impact - I think that is absolutely vital […] if it's not got a buy in from the top then you're always going to struggle to get it going across the university.