

Educational development - a view from outside: national trends and institutional issues at Imperial College London

El desarrollo Educativo, una mirada externa: rasgos nacionales y aspectos institucionales en el caso del *Imperial College London*.

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Resumen

El propósito central del presente artículo es informar y reflexionar acerca del estado y del estatus del desarrollo educativo en la Educación Superior en el Reino Unido, especialmente en el caso de Inglaterra, tomando el caso de la Universidad *Imperial College of London* como ejemplo de los temas y de los rasgos de lo que actualmente preocupa en esta temática. A la vez que describe los rasgos básicos del proceso de desarrollo educativo, el texto trata de reflejar de un modo crítico diferentes aspectos implicados en él: la necesidad de estrategias institucionales para el mismo; el dilema entre un desarrollo basado en disciplinas o bien en un enfoque transversal de la docencia, el estatus de “servicio”, comúnmente atribuido a los centros de desarrollo educativo y sus implicaciones; así como la necesidad de asegurar una carrera profesional para los encargados de promover y dar apoyo al desarrollo mencionado. En los tiempos de cambio que se dan en el contexto español, el lector encontrará algunos temas que pueden serle familiares y quizás podrá juzgar el nivel de debate que se da en el Reino Unido acerca de los mismos.

Palabras clave:

Desarrollo educativo, rasgos actuales, estrategia institucional, relaciones entre el desarrollo disciplinar o genérico, estatus de los servicios de apoyo al desarrollo educativo, la carrera de los formadores, el cambio en el contexto español.

Abstract

The aim of this article is both to inform and reflect on the state and status of educational development in the UK, with special reference to the English case, using Imperial College London as an example of current trends and issues. While describing current trends in educational development, the paper attempts to reflect critically on a number of current issues: the need for an institutional strategy for educational development; the relationship between generic and discipline-based development; the 'service' status often ascribed to centres of educational development and its implications; and the need for securing a safe career paths for developers. At times of change in the Spanish context, the Spanish reader should find some of such themes familiar and it may be of interest to him/her to gauge the level of the debate on them in the UK.

Keywords

Educational development, current trends, institutional strategy, the relationship between generic and discipline-based development, the 'service' status of the centres of educational development, career paths for developers, change in the Spanish context.

Introduction

The aim of this article is both to inform and reflect on the state and status of educational development in the UK, with special reference to the English case, using Imperial College London as an example of current trends and issuesⁱⁱ. Starting from the national framework, the argument moves on to the institutional level, before illustrating activities offered by the Centre for Educational Development (CED) at

Imperial College London. Descriptive parts in the paper mingle with reflective sections. This structure has been chosen in order to facilitate a contextual understanding for those who are unfamiliar with the current higher education system in England and the institutional structures at Imperial College London. The paper ends with suggestions for future development.

1. The National Framework

Every higher education institution (HEI) in the UK has a large degree of autonomy. Although each operates within a national legal framework and according to national policy, most are heavily dependent upon government for resources and all have to follow guidance issued by quasi-governmental bodies ('quangos'). There are some variations in the different countries of the UK as to the detail of arrangements. This paper focuses on England, where Imperial College London is situated. In England, there is considerable national guidance about the structure of programmes, a quality assurance regime, periodic ranking of research activity, numerous league tables, and accreditation of some programmes by professional bodies. Generally, the environment is one of growing student numbers, declining resources and strong competition between HEIs for reputation and resources. The most recent Higher Education Act (2004) introduced variable tuition fees for students from 2006 (DfES web).

While some universities are considered to be 'research intensive' and others are less strong in research and focus more on teaching, all HEIs do both. There are over two million higher education students in the UK, studying in 169 universities and higher education colleges. In the UK, the participation rate by school leavers is about 40%. As of Autumn 2005, women made up 57% of the student population (although with wide variation from one subject to another). Almost 13% of the student population comes from outside the UK, approximately two thirds coming from outside the EU (HEFCE, 2005). In England, Phase 1 programmes are three-four year periods of intensive full-time study, with teaching spread over thirty weeks per annum. Part-time study is possible in many instances, when study is spread over a longer period. Phase 2 programmes in their full-time format are typically studied over an intensive twelve-month period of teaching and research. Phase 3 programmes are taken over a three-four year period and focus on research and traditionally result in a single thesis for examination.

The description below summarises the national policies and bodies concerned with standards and structures relating to teaching and students.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) distributes public money for teaching and research to universities and colleges to *promote and fund high quality, cost effective teaching and research, meeting the diverse needs of students, the economy and society. The Council also plays a key role in ensuring accountability and promoting good practice.* The HEFCE acts in accord with Government policy, tailoring aims and initiatives accordingly (HEFCE website).

The Quality Assurance Agency is publicly funded, with a mission to *safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to*

encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education (QAA website). Each HEI is responsible for ensuring that appropriate standards are achieved and a good quality education is delivered, with a suitable quality assurance regime, including external examiners, in place. The QAA provides national reference points that help to define the standards and reviews institutions. QAA reviews are carried out through periodic institutional audits. The reference points include a Code of Practice that covers ten areas (e.g. assessment and programme monitoring and review), a Qualifications Framework into which all phase 1-3 programmes should fit, and subject benchmark statements concerning the standards of outcomes expected from undergraduate degrees in a range of disciplines. The QAA also visits institutions wishing to have degree awarding powers or be designated an HEI or university, and then advises Government on the applications.

The influential Dearing Report (NCIHE, 1997) included, among its recommendations to government, that teaching should be given more prominence. The creation of the Higher Education Academy and the blossoming in institutions of units or centres for preparing, and supporting university staff for their teaching can both be traced back in quite large part to the influence of Dearing.

The HEA was founded from predecessor bodies in May 2004. The HEA mission is to *help institutions, discipline groups and all staff to provide the best possible learning experience for their students* (HEA web). The HEA strategic aims and objectives express their role in relation to the student learning experience as promotion of good practice and to research and influence debate and actions. They also aim to *lead, support and inform the professional development and recognition of staff in higher education*.

The HEA runs a network of twenty-four 'subject centres', each of which focuses on how the experience of students studying that discipline can be enhanced. It also oversees a number of government funded schemes, namely the Centres for Excellence in Learning and Teaching and projects awarded through the Fund for Development of Teaching and Learning that institutions have won after national competition; additionally, it supports nationally selected teaching fellows (National Teaching Fellows). The HEA accredits programmes in learning and teaching for university staff, and grants entry to teachers' 'registered practitioner' status. Registered practitioner status is not yet compulsory, but it is Government's intention that all new, inexperienced academics take accredited programmes that enable them to acquire this status.

2. From governmental assumptions to models of change in educational development

In terms of teaching and learning in higher education, current governmental policies allow for a variety of institutional implementation, within a broader national framework. These policies push for compulsory educational development for all academic staff in the conviction that this will lead to both conceptual and behavioural changes. It is argued that these changes, taken cumulatively, will lead to a cultural shift which will favour students' better educational experiences and learning. In general terms, a relatively mild form of top-down change is encouraged. Specific governmental guidelines are meant to orient institutional practices.

This is a rational-all purposive model which embraces a model of change as something that can be encouraged and implemented from the top, without taking too much into account the fuzziness and complexities that accompany the shifts in the cultural practices of an institution. Institutional practices, local and disciplinary cultures, academic identities, student identities, staff developer identities, within current socio-historic values, are all components that have to be considered, when thinking about change. True enough, the model proposed by the government attempts to be as flexible as possible. The proof of this is in the creation of HEA's Subject Centres, each of which aims to facilitate dialogue at the level of disciplinary communities. Space is given to individual institutions to respond, in their own ways, to Government's recommendations. However, at the grass-roots level, things are much more complicated than at the strategic and planning levels, as negotiations in terms of institutional, epistemological and power structures are needed. This is not an easy exercise to carry out and it is far from being solved satisfactorily, both in the short and medium term. The good intentions behind this model that attempt to give more status to learning and teaching are often hampered by a failure to engage academics and departments in a real process of change.

This resulted in a panoply of complex and contradictory discourses which bear witness to the state of flux the higher education system is going through in England at the moment. Such discourses revolve around a series of concepts which underlie different sets of practice. I shall attempt, in the rest of this section, to briefly discuss the most salient concepts. The resulting picture is far from being exhaustive but should illustrate, in general terms, current debates around educational development in England.

The first set of conceptual terms is that comprising skills/training vs. education/transformation. The current paradigm, as already mentioned, is one of a rationalist-purposive nature. According to this model, it is important that lecturers acquire the necessary teaching skills that will allow them to function effectively in the classroom. This kind of training is mainly generic and embraces psycho-individualistic approaches that emphasise the psychological factors underlying teaching and learning. This model can theoretically be applied to all disciplines, in different institutional contexts. This contrasts with the type of teacher education which, being wider in nature (socio-cultural), is more attentive to local institutional and disciplinary realities. It focuses on specific groups of academics who are engaged, collectively, in reflecting and enhancing their own teaching and learning cultures, in line with the demands of their own students, the institution they work in and issues arising from their discipline. This type of educational development embraces a wide view of teacher education which is careful not only to the psychological modalities of teaching and learning, but embeds them within wider contexts. It aims at empowering specific disciplinary groups of colleagues through reflection and discussion of their teaching practices. Its political dimension is more overt and is fundamental in that change is conceived as owned by specific groups who act to transform their own environments and educational practices (bottom-up). In general, universities tend to embrace, in ways which vary from an institution to another, both models, with the psycho-individualistic one being still the overall norm. This signals the current state of flux in which educational development in England is.

Both accompanying and underlying this first conceptual pair (skills/training vs education/transformation), there are two further significant pairs: centralisation vs devolution and localisation vs. globalisation. Practically all universities in England are endowed today with a centre or unit of educational development. As we have seen, these centres tend to offer both generic training and/or work with specific groups and departments. Moreover, under national and international forces, there are trends to homogenise, as far as possible, educational development initiatives across institutions so as to allow the transfer of accreditation between these, within the national context, and beyond. At a national level, the HEA acts as the accrediting body which makes sure that certain guidelines are followed by all the institutions which seek its accreditation. At an international level, there are pressures allowing for the homogenization and transferability of teaching skills, as in the case in the Bologna process. The double tension between centralisation/devolution and localisation/globalisation, in terms of teaching and learning programmes, while enriching the debate about the aims and scope of educational development, also pushes for generic solutions that can be applied to a variety of contexts. This inevitably flattens richer institutional and disciplinary debates that are needed to give academics a sense of ownership which is at the core of any effective innovation.

At this point, it is important to remember that current changes in educational development initiatives take place within a changing higher education system where fundamental tensions between market and academic values exist. Trends towards accountability towards students are pushing universities towards improvement of the teaching/learning environments. The virtue of this is that teaching is given much more prominence than ever in the recent past in the English higher education system. However, tight resources often push for facile, behaviouristic changes in teaching and learning that go against rounder, more reflective and slower educational changes that developers often wish for.

Moreover, in policy terms, there are contradictions, within the English higher education system that do not favour a harmonious growth of teaching and learning cultures. I am referring here, specifically, to the pressures made on academics by the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). The latter, generally, confirms the idea that careers are ultimately made through research, thus impeding institutional reforms that encourage careers based on teaching (and not just exclusively research) merits. Teaching and learning are, therefore, once more relegated, in practice, to an ancillary role to which even those academics that are really interested in teaching often pay lip service. Systemic contradictions need therefore to be resolved, if real change is to be promoted.

As indicated above, different institutional cultures adopt different solutions in response to the guidance given by the government. Imperial College London has striven to offer solutions that are flexible enough to allow some form of cultural change in a traditionally research-led environment. After outlining Imperial College London's institutional framework, I shall endeavour to illustrate what the Centre for Educational Development (CED) does within the institution in favour of teaching and learning.

3. Imperial College London: the institutional framework

Imperial College London was established in 1907. Since then several mergers have taken place, including those which have created Imperial's current Faculty of Medicine. Its main campus is in South Kensington, London, with several other campuses in the capital and two outside it. The mission of the College states: *Imperial College London embodies and delivers world-class scholarship, education and research in science, engineering and medicine, with particular regard to their application in industry, commerce and healthcare. We will foster interdisciplinary working internally and collaborate widely externally.*

Imperial College London is a research intensive institution that concentrates on research and teaching in four areas, namely the sciences, engineering, business and medicine. In the Times Higher World University rankings (October 2005), it was ranked thirteenth in the world overall, for science it was tenth, for biomedicine sixth and for technology fifth (there were no rankings for business).

Imperial is one of the major colleges of the University of London and as such has considerable autonomy and responsibility for educational strategy. A large proportion of its income indirectly comes from government (by means of grants, students fees etc.); research grants and contracts from non-governmental sources also play a large part.

The College has a large proportion of international staff and students (Chinese, Greek, Malaysian, French and Singaporean being the largest non UK student groups); lower than the average national percentage of female students, and higher than the national average figures for Phase 2 and 3 and full-time students.

Imperial's student population in 2004-5 was as follows (Imperial, 2005):

| | Totals and Percentages | Home and EU | Overseas | Women | Engineering FTEs | Sciences FTEs | Medicine FTEs | Business FTEs |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Phase 1 | 7,843 (70.3) | 5,973 (53.6) | 1,870 (16.8) | 2,910 (26.1) | 3080 | 2774 | 1,989 | 0 |
| Phase 2 | 1,541 (13.8) | 963 (8.6) | 578 (5.2) | 622 (5.6) | 625.6 | 440 | 282.8 | 317.5 |
| Phase 3 | 1,768 (15.9) | 1,257 (11.3) | 511 (4.6) | 589 (5.3) | 758 | 687.5 | 463.5 | 70 |
| Totals for Full time students | 11,152 (100) | 8,193 (73.5) | 2,959 (26.5) | 4,121 (37.0) | | | | |
| Part time students, phase 2 & 3 | 904 (472+432) | | | | | | | |

In addition to belonging to their home department, all Phase 2 and 3 students are members of one of two graduate schools.

Imperial employed the following staff in 2004-5:

| Academic Staff | Research Staff | Support Staff | Total |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|-------|
| 1,108 | 1,733 | 2,923 | 5,764 |

Imperial is headed by a Rector, Deputy Rector, four Pro-Rectors, the Principals/Heads of the four main academic areas, and the heads of the big administrative areas. The top managers are supported by the heads of the graduate schools, heads of academic departments, and the remaining heads of administrative and academic support services units. The CED counts as part of the academic support structure of the College.

The central functions and committees of the College have a 'light touch' in academic matters relating to teaching and learning, with the degree of central College guidance and regulation kept to the minimum to ensure comparable standards and structures. Much teaching and learning decision-making happens at the level of each programme but includes compliance (and discussion and approval as appropriate) with national, College and Faculty/School guidelines and committees. In addition to the programme leaders, each academic unit has a leader of all undergraduate (phase 1, bachelors) programmes, a separate or combined role in respect of taught postgraduate programmes (phase 2, masters) and may have a third person in charge of postgraduate research studies (phase 3, doctorate). This structure is usually paralleled with one in respect of pastoral care for students in the different phases that in turn feeds through into College-level student learning and welfare support services. With this relatively dispersed model, the CED works through programmes, networks and workshops to help staff enhance their own understanding and abilities in educational development and can contribute advice when it is asked to do so, to individuals, programme teams or other groupings, and when it sits on a relevant committee or working group.

4. CED: aims, structures and activities

The CED was created at Imperial College in the year 2000 (though work in this area had been going on, in less structured and visible ways, for nearly thirty years).

The CED works collaboratively with individuals, groups and departments, across the College, to raise the profile of learning, teaching, course design, assessment and supervision, and to promote research into student learning and all aspects of educational development at Imperial. In this sense, it diversifies itself from but works collaboratively with twin centres/units, like the Staff Development Unit (SDU), whose aim is to provide support in areas such as personal, professional, management and information technology development, and the Centre for Professional Development (CPD) which offers a diverse range of intensive short courses for professionals working in science, technology, medicine and management.

There are thirteen people in the Centre, of whom five are full time academics (including the Head), two full time administrators and an administrative manager. The administrative staff assist in the administration of a range of activities like workshops,

programmes, grants and networks. The academic staff, apart from their teaching and supporting role, also carry out committee and institutional duties, along with pursuing their own research. The Centre is coordinated by a Head that is responsible to the Pro-Rector for Educational Quality.

In terms of its activities, the Centre offers a number of activities to Imperial College London staff. There are about eighty workshops which last from two days to two hours, with an average attendance of twelve people. These workshops cover a wide array of topics (titles range from 'Communicating Knowledge' to 'Becoming a Personal Tutor' and 'Inspiring Reflective Learners', for instance). The main aim of these workshops is to allow staff to 'dip their toes' in the area of educational development, assisting them in those areas of teaching, learning and assessment that are of immediate relevance to them.

Alongside the workshops, the Centre runs two programmes, the aim of which is to give staff a more structured approach to educational development. The first of these is CASLAT (Certificate of Advanced Study in Learning and Teaching). This is a part-time post-graduate programme, leading to a formal award accredited by the Higher Education Academy. It started in 2001 and, in 2005/06, it has its sixth intake. CASLAT participants include experienced academics, newly appointed academics and post-doctoral researchers. It is important to stress that CASLAT is now compulsory for all inexperienced junior academics and its completion is required as part of an individual's progression beyond the probationary period. It is assessed through observation of teaching or supervision, and the production of a portfolio.

The second programme is the SLTP one (Supporting Learning and Teaching Programme). This is a blended programme (mixing face teaching with online interactions) which is aimed at staff who support teaching and learning like librarians, researchers, laboratory technicians etc. SLTP is now in its fourth intake and usually counts around twenty-five participants.

Alongside these two programmes, the CED also plays a very significant role in the running of a Med (Master in education) in Surgical Education. This is organized and taught in collaboration with the Department of Biosurgery and Technology. The programme started in October 2005 with sixteen part-time students, all surgeons at different stages of their career, who are interested in medical education, both for their personal and professional development.

The CED also supports and co-ordinates educational grants, the aim of which is to encourage a different kind of development of those members of staff who wish to be part of a community of like-minded people who are interested in educational development, around specific areas of interest. There are two types of grants on offer: the Teaching Development and Teaching Research Grants. Each of these aims to fund projects that are of immediate significance for teaching and learning at Imperial, with an emphasis on a product (a syllabus, a curriculum, teaching materials etc) in the case of the Development Grants, and on research questions, in the case of the Research Grants. The Centre also supports a Courses and Conferences Fund to support attendance at educational courses and conferences, and applications to join the HEA.

The CED also organizes three networks. These are: LINKED which has an e-mail membership of over two hundred staff interested in educational development, a subset of whom gather for four to six meetings a year to which external speakers are often invited; the EDCs (Educational Development Co-ordinators) which is a group of enthusiasts for teaching and learning from each department in College who meet, once a term, to share ideas and discuss issues relating to teaching and learning. This group represents a real attempt at linking the CED more closely with departments. The CED also provides consultation, by 'phone, e-mail or in person, for people who may request assistance in teaching, learning and supervision from around the College. Additionally, the CED academic staff also sit on many college-wide committees and groups, like the Learning and Teaching Strategy Management Group and the Quality and Academic Review Committee. It also plays an important part in creating the learning and teaching, and e-learning strategies.

Finally, academics also carry their own research, publish and participate in conferences. Collectively, the Centre is undertaking a group research and development project entitled 'Teaching at Imperial: perceptions of lecturers after probationary workshops' and it is part of a network of seven universities led by the University of Oxford, for a five-year project on 'Preparing for Academic Practice'.

5. The way forward?

As I have attempted to illustrate, Imperial College London is currently attempting to meet Government's expectations for the improvement of learning and teaching standards through a series of activities promoted and carried out by the CED. The aim is difficult to achieve, as Imperial has been traditionally a strongly-research-led institution. Nevertheless, some significant changes are taking place. First of all, with increasing numbers of newer staff undergoing educational development, there is a widening understanding of issues related to teaching and learning. This is accompanied by a changing career structure. Nowadays, at Imperial, academics have to demonstrate excellence in at least three out of four areas: education and teaching, research, leadership and professional practice. While, in reality, at Imperial, research remains the main career propeller, it is important to recognise that teaching now features more prominently within the institution. Taking all these changes cumulatively, it can be argued that some form of cultural shift is occurring. However, this will not be forthcoming nor speedy. Time is needed and further institutional support is necessary.

There are common preoccupations, both in Spain and in England, in relation to issues of educational development, in spite of the different contexts. Such contexts, of course, limit and/or encourage different kinds of actions. Important differences are easily identifiable between the Spanish and the British situations. For a start, the status of civil servant that Spanish academics enjoy partly makes them more resilient to national and institutional guidance. Concurrently, the lack of existence of national plans in relations to teaching and learning (and the absence of anything similar to the HEA) militate against more focused and communal actions. Finally, Spain has been dealing with the impact of the Bologna process to an extent that is practically unknown in England. However, some themes are of common interest, both in the Spanish and English contexts, and deserve further investigation/discussion:

- Given the relatively new status of centres for educational development, there is a need for creative thinking but this must be accompanied by strategic moves. These, while supporting innovation, must also attempt to make it part of the wider institutional culture. It is important not only that innovative moves in teaching and learning fit within existing evidence about effective practice. It is as paramount that the different academic communities, within an institution, both understand and, ultimately, embrace innovation.
- An important corollary to this is the need to innovate by groups of people, at disciplinary and departmental level, in order to address the question of 'ownership' of change. Experimentation of innovation with and within different disciplinary groups is necessary, if innovation is to be effective and not be seen as simply following diverse educational ideas put forward by educational developers. A lack of engagement with disciplines and departments is, arguably, the weakest link in the English context, where educational development is carried out mostly in generic and top-down ways. It is important to work with specific groups of people who have specific needs, along with specific discipline-led views about teaching and learning. The CED is attempting to do this both via specific workshops, e.g. 'Designing for Learning', where educationalists work with groups of people from a specific discipline to discuss current issues in teaching and learning in that specific discipline), and via consultation. However, an optimum engagement with the different departments is yet to be reached. Of course, this kind of approach to educational development can be slower and both time and resource consuming. Trust needs to be built between departments and educational centres, and this in itself takes time. Different educational developers should act as special links with specific departments to which they are attached. This way, through deeper common knowledge of each other, educationalists should be able to converse more effectively with academics, thus having more of an impact on their teaching and learning strategies, and actions. One way to achieve this aim is to foster educational research based on specific disciplinary areas in order to a) give educationalists due respect for their work and b) make teaching and learning issues more relevant for the academics involved. This type of research on teaching and learning may be an important first step in building meaningful relationships between educationalists and discipline specialists, with a view to favouring innovation which is of real significance to all parties involved.
- If adopted, a strategy of this kind implies the need to clarify, within educational centres, what role each member of staff plays in relation to innovation, with whom they should work and for what purpose. A clear elucidation of what role different educational developers have to play within the overall scheme of things is strategically necessary, in order not to confuse roles and tasks, and make innovation effective.
- Favouring work at disciplinary and departmental level should not mean a mere, total shift from generic to discipline-based educational development. The two are not mutually exclusive. There is a need to think about a sustainable balance between generic and discipline-specific development. While I consider the latter to be preferable, the former is also necessary in order to generate comparative reflections from other disciplinary areas. Hearing experiences from different disciplinary contexts has the beneficial effect of

‘enstrangement’, of literally, making the familiar ‘strange’. This is important in order to avoid complacency, on the part of disciplinary groups, and favour a more balanced assessment of their own thinking and practice, through healthy comparative discussions with peers from other disciplinary areas.

- It goes without saying that, in order for innovation to be effective, it is important that it is firmly embedded within wider institutional strategies. It is paramount to lobby for overall institutional support which does not depend on the good will of, say, an individual pro-rector, but is firmly embedded within strategic plans which will survive individual initiatives. Only in this way, continuity can be assured. This is much needed for the healthy growth of educational centres/units whose often fragmented actions are taken as a reason for disrespect for their work. Alignment between strategies for innovation within educational centres and between these and the wider institution, is paramount, if teaching and learning are to be taken seriously.
- Within wider institutional strategies, it is important that educational centres lobby in favour of a more varied career structure that promotes people not just for the quality of their research but also of their teaching, or, even more desirably, for the quality of the relationship between teaching and research. This aim is still far-fetched within the English context, even if there are initial trends in favour of supporting careers based on good teaching (as we have seen in the case of Imperial). While, there are signs that such support is forthcoming, research, in practice, still dominates, when it comes to career development. It is the overall academic culture which needs to be discussed in relation to the purposes of higher education in the contemporary world. Clearly, in a climate of widening participation, teaching and learning become a priority more than ever in the past, when participation in higher education was made up of small numbers of the best abled students who could make up for most deficiencies in good teaching. Things have changed drastically over the last thirty years or so and Institutions have the responsibility of signalling this to governments, if slogans about the importance of teaching and learning have to have any substance. Educational development centres should not only ‘train’ but engender a vigorous debate about the nature, aims and scope of the modern university, in which good teaching is as important as good research. There is a civic dimension to this debate, if one wants to support a kind of university that is not just *reactive* to the needs of the market and industry, but is *pro-active* in promoting a wider kind of education for citizenship and a type of knowledge which does not just depend on the concept of ‘usability’ but encourages the real passions of students and staff alike.
- Finally, related to the last point, it is necessary for educational centres to discuss their own state and status within their own institution. In England, educational developers are often considered to be ‘service people’ who do not have academic status (in fact, some universities employ educational developers who are not academics altogether but are administrators). This diminishes the status of educational development in their own eyes and in those of the people with whom they are supposed to be working. Normal academic status should be guaranteed to academic developers, as most of them are trained academics in their own right who have decided to leave their original discipline to dedicate themselves to educational development. This is why it is arguable that educational developers should always be engaged in some form of educational research and have the duty to maintain their level of

scholarship always at a very high level. One cannot preach good practice to others and not apply this to oneself. And, in any case, no 'service' can be complete, if it is not accompanied by constant efforts to research one's own professional and academic field of practice. This is why the term 'service' is redundant in this context and is only a harmful misnomer which one should do away with. Fighting in the name of one's own professional pride is a paramount pre-requisite for innovation. This only acquires significance and momentum, if carried forward by people who believe in it, in the highest personal and professional sense.

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ⁱ Descriptive sections 1, 3 and 4 were written together with Heather Fry (CED, Imperial College London) for an unpublished research report. My thanks go to Heather for allowing me to use these sections in this paper. The arguments and reflections expressed in the rest of the article are purely mine.

ⁱⁱ In the course of the article, I make a specific distinction between the UK (which comprises England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and England itself. This is important to remember, as there are differences between the educational policies in England and other parts of the UK.